

Desert & Southern Rockies Landscape Conservation Cooperative Outreach Meeting
Focusing on the Colorado and Rio Grande Rivers
Las Vegas, Nevada
10/23/2010

For a complete list of meeting participants, please see Appendix 1.

Presentations for this meeting are available at <http://www.usbr.gov/WaerSMART/lcc.html>.

Meeting Objectives

1. Provide information on LCCs in general and specifically in the Desert and Southern Rockies LCCs.
2. Determine agency and stakeholder interest in participating in LCCs and identify other potential partners.
3. Provide an overview of existing regional, state and local partnerships that link science and management and discuss how LCCs can build on and work with these partnerships.
4. Expand existing scoping committee (or other mechanism) to include other partners and to help guide future actions taken to organize and develop a charter for the LCCs.
5. Initiate identification of landscape-scale research and science needs.

Overview of LCCs (Presentation by Leslie Meyers, Reclamation)

The presentation by Leslie Meyers provided an overview of the LCCs and a summary of what other LCCs are doing. Leslie noted that the LCCs are a Department of Interior initiative. The LCCs are in part driven by climate change. A key question for each LCC will be how stakeholders from around the country, and from around each region, can come together to secure the science needed to address climate change issues. But the LCCs should not be limited to climate change.

Presentation

- What are LCCs?
- Current LCCs
- Areas covered by Southern Rockies LCC and Desert LCC
- Primary functions of an LCC are to:
 - Develop, access, and share applied science
 - Leverage funding, information, and technical expertise for applied science projects
 - Collaborate and communicate on matters of common interest
- Climate Science Centers - CSC focus on fundamental science; LCCs focus on applied science
- LCC activities

Overview of Existing Partnerships in the Desert and Southern Rockies LCCs

Colorado River Basin Water Supply and Demand Study

Terry Fulp, Reclamation discussed that the Colorado River Basin Water Supply and Demand Study is intended to define current and future imbalances in water supply and demand, to assess the system reliability and risks to all basin resources, and to develop and evaluate adaptation and mitigation strategies. The study is approximately halfway through its two year schedule. The study will make recommendations on how to allocate funding in the future, not decisions.

Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program

John Swett, Reclamation, program manager stated the goals of the program are to (1) conserve habitat and work toward recovery of threatened and endangered species as well as reduce the likelihood of additional species being listed, (2) accommodate present water diversions and power production and optimize opportunities for future water and power development, and (3) provide the basis for incidental take authorizations. It is a hybrid ESA, which includes Section 7 and Section 10 consultation for federal and non-federal entities. Of the fifty-six entities involved in the partnership, forty-one of those provide funds to the program.

Perri Benemelis with the Arizona State Department of Water Resources provided a state perspective on the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program. She discussed the ESA Section 10 compliance for non-federal entities. Arizona has been a part of the planning, and has been a member of the steering committee, for 10 years. And, the state will continue to fund the program. She believes that there is a much better chance of success through a coordinated effort.

Grand Canyon Adaptive Management Program (John Hamill, USGS)

The objectives of the program include: restoring and maintaining native fish, maintaining a healthy rainbow trout sport fishery, establishing needed flow, temperature, and sediment regimes, maintaining and improving the quality of the recreation experience, and maintaining/increasing power production. They operate in a very complex, and often conflicting, legal framework, which includes the Law of the River, the Grand Canyon Protection Act of 1992, and the Endangered Species Act. The stakeholder committee, Adaptive Management Work Group is a Federal Advisory Committee (established under the FACA law) and comprised of states, power user groups, recreation groups, federal agencies, tribes, and environmental groups.

WaterSMART, SECURE (Dave Raff, Reclamation)

WaterSMART stands for Sustain and Manage America's Resources for Tomorrow. It was initiated through the WaterSMART Grants (SECURE 9504), Title XVI – Water Reclamation and Reuse Program, and the Basin Study Program. The purpose of SECURE (Science and Engineering to Comprehensively Understand and Responsibly Enhance) is to assess specific risks to the water supply of each major Reclamation river basin, which may include change in snowpack, timing and quantity of runoff, changes in groundwater recharge and discharge, and increase in demand for water as a result of increasing temperatures and/or rate of reservoir evaporation.

Group input on existing partnerships

- 7 basin states governors representatives
- Air pollution control districts
- Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
- California Essential Habitat Connectivity Project
- Cattlemen's Association
- Culebra Coalition
- Department of Defense
- Department of Energy
- Desert Connectivity Project
- Four Forest Restoration Initiative
- Jemez Forest Landscape Restoration Program
- Long term Ecological Resource Sites
- Middle Rio Grande ESA Collaborative Program
- National Ecological Observatory Network

- Pacific Institute
- Professional societies: Wildlife Society, Ecological Society of America, Society of Ecological Restoration
- Salton Sea Authority
- Upper Colorado and San Juan Endangered Fish Recovery Implementation Programs (UCRIP, SJRIP)
- U.S. Forest Service
- USGS National Water Quality Assessment Program
- Utton Center – University of New Mexico
- Water Education Foundation
- West FAST
- Western States Water Council
- Water Utility Climate Alliance
- Western States Governors Association Wildlife Corridors Initiative

Potential Approaches to Development of the LCC

Existing Approaches to the Development of the LCCs (Janet Bair/FWS)

Janet Bair is the Regional Water Policy Coordination for the FWS, which is a new position in the region. The position has been developed to lend a region wide strategy and approach to addressing water issues. She noted that LCCs are intended to do the following:

- LCC purpose
- LCC will include: steering committee, coordinator and science coordinator
- Common first steps
- Existing efforts – Great Plains, Great Northern and California LCCs
- Start up considerations: representation, roles of existing partnerships, start up phasing, subunits and ecoforums, committee tasks, avoiding redundancy, and leveraging opportunities

Questions

- Why were two science coordinators needed in the Great Northern LCC?
 - USGS and FWS felt it was important to play a role as science coordinator, and the group agreed to two science coordinators. This may change in time, as the group evolves.
- Some existing partnerships are already doing similar work, why create LCCs to do the same thing?
 - The Department of Interior wants to make these regional efforts work, and the funding is available. The question is: how does the LCC leverage what other groups are doing, and not repeat the same things?
- It appears that each LCC that was mentioned is following a unique process. Is there any concern of lack of consistency on a nation-wide scale?
 - Yes, there are some concerns. There are some common basic operating principles that are in effect across all regions. But, each situation is unique and the LCCs need to adapt to their own unique issues.
- Is it possible to use performance measures, such as those used by the Great Plains LCC, as one way to coordinate across LCCs? If so, is it possible to get that information?
 - The performance measures for climate change efforts were developed by the federal partners and are available if the LCC wants to use them.
- If the goal is a nationwide network, will there be a database to connect the efforts of all LCCs?

- There are some resources to tie the LCCs together, but there are also unique attributes to each LCC that will not be connected on a nationwide scale.
- What are the national level management objectives of the LCCs?
 - There will be a national high-level climate change goal which will include the work of the LCCs. There is a lot of discussion at a national level about data management at that scale.

Discussion

Structure Suggestions

- Organize by geography – Geographic regions make sense because each region will have different priorities. In addition, partnerships are already set by geography; that setup will work with current partnerships.
- Organize by river basin – Many resources are closely related to rivers and streams, so this would tie together a lot of other efforts.
- Organize by desert.
- Organize by terrestrial systems, with sub-committees on desert regions, and a fourth sub-committee on water resources. This could relieve concerns from people interested in terrestrial issues, who might be concerned that their issues would be lost in a water basin centric view.
- A water committee that floats between both LCCs.
- An ESA committee that floats between both LCCs.

Concerns

- There is a need for basinwide (on the Colorado River) perspective on coordination. There is currently no organization or structure that addresses that need.
- The Rio Grande and Colorado Rivers need to be addressed independently because the issues and partnerships are unique.
- There was concern that we would be forgetting about non-Colorado or Rio Grande water sources if the focus was on those two basins; others observed that all of the other water sources are tributaries or somehow related to those two basins, and therefore will be covered.
- Biology along the river systems may be forsaken in lieu of hydrology alone.
- Collaborating across LCC water interests.

Science and Research Needs (Dave Raff/BOR)

The objectives of defining the current science and research needs is to ensure the appropriate support of water management, to develop a common understanding of shared science needs, and to find opportunities to leverage funding. There will be interim science sub-committees for the Desert and Southern Rockies LCCs which will be staffed by agencies with different science needs. The goal of those sub-committees will be to start assessing those needs. Participants brainstormed additional science needs based on the follow questions:

1. What water management science does your agency/organization currently have underway that could lend themselves to LCC collaboration and/or be leveraged by the LCC?
2. Based on your understanding of the LCC, do you have a specific research, science, or information priority you would suggest the LCC focus on?

Identified Science Needs from Participants (Discussion and Flip-Chart Exercise)

- Remote sensing and NOW casting for BLM to adequately address rangeland health through remote sensing technology
- Phonological and climatological data

- Research needs from the Tamarisk Report (study complete in December 2009)
- Link between climate change, invasive species, and fires - this is effecting Desert Tortoise habitat
- Social and economic needs and how those needs will change as a result of climate change
- Regional groundwater and/or surface water systems using natural hydrologic boundaries
- Teleconnections: dust on snow/land management potential to offset impacts
- Long term basic data collection and established index sites
- Consistency in protocols for indicators of climate change across programs
- Common metrics for reporting: allows sub-committees and LCCs to share data; data management protocols
- Responses to climate change on large scale, not filling small holes in programs
- Effects of climate change on ecosystem service.
- Effects of climate change on water-dependent species
- Comprehensive study of habitat corridors and wildlife movement on an LCC wide basis
- Water budget(s) – refinement of components such as recharge, discharge, etc. and the development of new tools or technologies to address this need.
- Effects of large-scale vegetation die-off on watershed health and yield
- Determine how needs and results are to be reported

Wrap Up (Dave Raff/BOR)

- The Scoping Committee will add the science needs information to the data that they have already collected.
- There is a small amount of funding available from Reclamation for FY10 and FY11. Reclamation will work to release a request for proposal to address some of the research needs identification. This will happen in coordination with the convening of the steering committee.
- Tribes are an important stakeholder in the LCCs
- How will Tribes, as well as other stakeholders, be able to find the resources needed to participate in the process?
- All information from the LCC meetings will be distributed to those people who participated in the meetings and posted on <http://www.usbr.gov/WaerSMART/lcc.html>.

Appendix 1: Meeting participants

Matthew Andersen (USGS)
Janet Bair (USFWS)
Perri Benemelis (AZ Dept. of Water Resources)
Daniel Bright USGS (NV water Science Center)
Lee Case (USGS Salton Sea Science)
John Carter (Imperial Irrigation District)
Keiba Crear (Southern Nevada Water Authority)
Martin Einert (USBR)
Amanda Erath (USBR)
Nicole Everett (Colorado River Commission – NV)
Deborah Finch (USFS - Rky Mtn Research Center)
Terry Fulp (USBR)
Kara Gillon (Defenders of Wildlife)
Katrina Grantz (USBR - UC region)
Heidi Hadley (BLM)
Grace Haggerty (NM Interstate Stream/Middle Rio Grande Collaborative)
John Hamill (USGS)
Bob Hart (USGS)
Leslie James (CREDA)
Jeff Johnson (SNWA)
Michael King (Imperial Irrigation Dist)
Jan Matusak (Metro water District of S.CA)
Leslie Meyers (USBR)
Wade Noble (WMInd)
Brian Parry (USBR)
Kristeen Penrod (SC Wildlands)
David Raff (USBR)
William Rinne (Southern Nevada Water Authority)
Tina Shields (Imperial Irrigation Dist - Water Supply Planning)
John Swett (USBR)
Kent Turner (NPS)

Facilitator: Jody Erikson (The Keystone Center)
Recorder: Brain Manwaring (USIECR)