

Southern Rockies LCC Meeting
Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge
Denver, CO
7/8/2010

This meeting, co-hosted by US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Bureau of Reclamation, brought together participants from a range of federal and state agencies, academic and scientific institutions, and NGOs, to introduce the concept of Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs), and discuss both the direction and potential structure for the Southern Rockies LCC. Specifically, meeting objectives included:

1. Provide information on LCCs in general and specifically the Southern Rockies LCC.
2. Provide a brief overview of existing LCC efforts and organizational models.
3. Provide an overview of existing landscape scale partnerships that link science and management to learn ways that the LCC can add value and build on these partnerships.
4. Assess participation and provide direction for an evolving scoping team that will assess LCC needs and the role of the LCC in addressing those needs.
5. Identify next steps to recruit and engage additional partners at the second scoping team meeting to guide the LCC formation and to move the organizational process forward so that a Steering Committee can be formed and act quickly.

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

[Background – Landscape Conservation Cooperatives \[Presentation by Matt Hogan, FWS\]](#)

The presentation provided an overview of the LCCs and a summary of what other LCCs are doing. When the LCC concept was initially outlined by the FWS, the idea was to establish – or “stand up” – one LCC per year in each FWS region. The Department of Interior has been supportive of the initiative, which accelerated the timeline. This has led to some confusion about goals and structure. Each of the LCCs is working through these issues, as we anticipate doing here in the Southern Rockies.

The major driver here is climate change. A key question will be how to come together to secure the science needed to address climate change issues? But the LCCs should not be limited to climate change. There are certainly other stressors on landscapes that must be taken into account.

What are LCCs?

- A conservation alliance: However, they are not intended to replace any existing partnerships; they are merely a way to bring together organizations/agencies that are doing conservation delivery
- Capacity and focused science: Bringing together information resources and funding

The primary functions of an LCC are to:

- Identify and prioritize information needs
- Serve as a network for shared science capacity
- Provide science information
- Support adaptive management

The Fish and Wildlife Service are responsible for (or co-leading) six LCCs in this region:

- The Great Northern LCC
- Great Plains LCC
- Plains and Prairie Potholes LCC
- Great Basin LCC
- Eastern Tall Grass Prairie LCC
- Southern Rockies

Note that some LCCs, such as the Great Northern, have “steering” committees indicating they are further down the line in terms of their governance structure; some are already beginning to put staff positions in place. The newer LCCs have been using “scoping” committees which are still in the formative stages.

In general, the LCCs will be designed to meet the individual needs of each region. The leads are avoiding using a cookie cutter approach. The LCCs are intended to be partner-led. DOI or the agency lead/s are not dictating how they should be structured, or what goals or objectives they should take on. There are lots of different models emerging. The Southern Rockies LCC does not have to follow any one of those models. We have the latitude to decide based on the priorities and needs identified.

Questions/discussion:

- 1) Do you have information on the Great Plains LCC RFP available?** Yes – you can find it on the Joint Venture website: www.pljv.org
- 2) For the LCCs that have issued RFPs, I wonder if any of them have been jointly funded, or solely funded by FWS?** I think FWS is the major funder, but there are certainly other agencies/organizations that will bring money to the table. They will not only bring resources with hard dollars, but also with existing science, existing people, and expertise. As the LCCs evolve, some may choose not to follow an RFP process based on their priorities.
- 3) How does an agency gain standing in a steering committee?** Basically if you want to be on board than you are on board. There’s not “pay to play” rule. Agencies don’t need to commit money or resources, they just need someone at a management level who would like to contribute to the priorities and activities of the LCC. The intent today is to start to identify those interested parties and get a balanced representation for the committee.
- 4) Is there a way to get a sense of how the agencies are budgeting for these over the next fiscal years?**

BOR: The FY 2011 budget is public – the total line item is \$3 million for the two LCCs (Southern Rockies, Desert). We are intending to allocate \$1 million to the Southern Rockies and \$1 million to the Desert; the other \$1 million is for climate assessments and other activities. The FY 2012 budget is not out yet, but you will likely see similar funding levels.

FWS will provide funding for each LCC. You are going to continue to see requests for LCC money, but we’re not entirely sure what money we will have for FY 2011.

USGS: \$395k has been allocated to the Southwest Biological Center, which is dedicated to the Southern Rockies LCC for FY 2011. This is likely to continue. The Climate Science Centers and the National Climate Change and Wildlife Science Center has mainly used funding for research projects in the past. We are now trying to facilitate the linkages to have this work support the LCCs.

BIA received \$200k for 2010 budget; however, nothing has yet been approved for FY 2011 or future budgets.

5) *If this is truly a conservation science alliance, I would suggest we focus on collaboration instead of scrambling for the money. We really need collaboration among all the players to see what true landscape conservation is. If it is truly at a landscape level, then some entities, for example the State of Wyoming, will be involved in different LCCs. We're concerned that some of the LCCs have not communicated with us about their priorities, so we're also beginning to question the coordination among LCCs.*

This is a fair criticism. Ideally, the process should not rush to show success in six months. Many LCCs have been in a hurry due to pressure to show something for the money that has been allocated. I don't feel we are under the same pressure in the Southern Rockies LCC to get money obligated under an RFP. Current we are "scoping" to look at priorities.

The LCCs should definitely recognize these boundary issues, and there certainly needs to be collaboration among LCCs as well. As these efforts mature, they will become more sophisticated, and I think you will see more collaboration among the LCCs. At least that is the vision.

6) *I'd also like to share concerns about how the LCC boundaries have been defined. As an example, the Grand Canyon has been split into two different LCCs. Will there be flexibility in re-defining LCC boundaries as we identify our priorities and needs?*

If this is truly about conservation delivery, it shouldn't matter if there is an arbitrary boundary between LCCs. If we've identified the issues and stressors of the area, the LCCs should provide the opportunity for agencies to communicate and pull together resources, which are much more important than focusing on the boundaries.

7) *How do we get information on other LCCs so we can find out what decisions have been made and what lessons have been learned, so that we build on what is being done elsewhere?*

In terms of transparency, we are working hard to make sure the right people get the right information. As more of the infrastructure is put in place, I think this will improve.

(BOR): This is a very good point. I'm participating in a number of work groups and we're also dealing with this question. It is something that is evolving and there are bound to be growing pains, but it is something that is being worked on. I'm hoping the Southern Rockies and the Desert LCCs will have good communication, since they have many of the same players; BOR and FWS are co-leads in both LCCs, and we are very much aware of this concern.

(Other participant): Recognizing that each of the LCCs will define themselves, it does seem that there would be a benefit – at least from the science perspective – that there is some consistency of approach so that they are not all disjointed.

[Assessment of Existing Landscape Scale Partnerships Linking Science and Management: Models for the Southern Rockies LCC \[Presentation by Greg Watson, FWS\]](#)

This presentation provides an overview of both the similarities and differences among LCCs. It's important to emphasize these differences so that we all have a common understanding about some of the models that have been developed, and some of the lessons that have been learned in the other LCCs. This offers a foundation to build from as we begin to collaborate here in the Southern Rockies.

The purpose of the LCCs as originally envisioned is to act as a vehicle for the implementation of collaborative, outcome-based adaptive management. The goal is to provide the capacity to support conservation design – although these were not meant to direct, but rather to inform delivery on the ground – and to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of our respective agencies and organizations.

One of the first steps of many of the LCCs has been to recognize the many existing partnerships and the importance of building upon and leveraging these partnerships.

- One of the great strengths of the Great Plains LCC has been to leverage the work of the Joint Ventures.
- To develop the RFP in the Great Northern, they reached out through a number of forums and meetings to see what projects were currently underway, and what science was already in place. GNLCC reached out to over 140 agencies and organizations through webinars and surveys, and we used that information to identify ways that the LCC could leverage those existing partnerships. We certainly encourage LCCs to do that early on. In the assessment for the Great Northern LCC, we identified some key categories of information the LCC could support: e.g., Climate information, land cover, data management, habitat connectivity, vulnerability assessments, biological/species monitoring, and evaluation.

Some of the communal elements in the development of science capacity needs have included:

- Situational awareness among conservation practitioners, so that we know what's going on and who is doing what
- The importance of thematic organization
- Opportunities to leverage and knit together ongoing landscape-scale conservation efforts and existing partnerships
- Provide for foundational data platforms across geographic areas that can be built upon as LCCs move forward

Discussion questions posed to the group:

- 1) **What landscape conservation programs does your agency/organization currently have underway that could lend themselves to the Southern Rockies LCC collaboration and /or be leveraged by the LCC?**

Participants provided lists of regional initiatives and projects, with some detail for each of these existing partnerships (see Appendix 2).

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?

Priorities identified and discussed by participants:

- **Substantive themes/research priorities**
 - Climate Change; Adaptation; modeling
 - Energy Development/Oil and Gas Development
 - Sage Brush/Sage Grouse
 - Mapping-Wildlife, wetlands, rare sensitive species, Vegetation
 - Endangered Species Protection/High elevation species
 - Conservation/protected areas
 - Forest Restoration; Bark Beetle
 - Water; Hydrology; Modeling
 - Fire; public safety
 - Invasive Species
 - Air Quality
 - Cultural Resources

- **Tools**
 - DSS
 - GIS Mapping
 - Monitoring
 - Vulnerability Assessments

- **Institutional/Organization Issues**
 - Working across LCC Boundaries
 - The need for applied science; on the ground action
 - Identifying priority strategies
 - Elimination of duplication

[Organizing the new LCC \[Presentation by Avra Morgan, BOR\]](#)

The mission of the Bureau of Reclamation is to manage, develop, and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner, in the interest of the American Public.

FWS and BOR are co-leads for the Southern Rockies LCC. So what does that mean?

- We are serving as overall hosts of the process
- BOR and FWS are both co-leads *and* participants in the effort

- Our goal is to help partners identify resource and science priorities
- We will initiate the process for developing a steering committee
- We'll be participating in Department-wide working groups that are developing guidance for a national network of LCCs
- We will also provide staff and funding to conduct outreach/travel reimbursement. We are providing \$450k in FY 2010, \$1 million for FY 2011, and we will look to provide funding for science projects in the future.

We want to emphasize that the LCC is conceived as a partnership, so we're anticipating that the partnership will determine our priorities. The Southern Rockies LCC will not focus only on water because BOR is involved in a leadership role. Water is, of course, important to BOR, but so are many other issues. We want to engage more water resources entities/offices from each state, but I want to reassure you all that this initiative will not be dominated by water.

Potential Southern Rockies LCC Milestones – Organizing

- Outreach to potential partners: July-December 2010
- Scoping Activities: July-December 2010
- Second Scoping Team Meeting: September-October 2010
- Formation of a Steering Committee and finalization of the operational plan: January 2011

Scoping Activities:

- Develop a statement of goals and objectives
- Identify science needs and resource priorities
- Identify existing partnerships
- Define an appropriate organizational structure
- Identify participants and roles

Questions about the steering committee:

- How big should it be?
- How often should it meet: quarterly/biannually ?
- Should it have both an overall coordinator *and* science coordinator?
- What other staffing will be needed?

Possible subcommittees?

- Science
- Technical
- Scoping
- Funding and Resources
- Coordination

Questions/discussion:

- 1) *Do you intend the steering committee to prepare or lead the operational plan?*

That's the way it was done in the Great Plains. The approach we've taken in the Desert LCC is to identify a scoping committee for those who are interested in the development of the LCC, and then later to form a steering committee.

2) *Is there an operational plan for how the LCC would function procedurally? Do you expect that resource and science priorities will be included in that plan?*

These will be evolving all along, but yes, these are included in other LCCS plans. A common, agreed-upon operational plan will help to identify science projects and get them funded. The current plan is for the scoping team to work on identifying these priorities in the fall. We actually already have a small scoping team started, and we're planning to host a meeting in September with a larger group of potential partners.

3) *You run the risk of not having ownership of the process if the steering committee is going to be brought on so late*

Hopefully those participating in the work of the scoping committee will continue to participate in the steering committee. I'm struggling with how to develop a steering committee that is representative, but not enormous and cumbersome. A large committee may be inevitable, but we should talk about the structure/organizational issues before jumping right into defining and establishing a steering committee.

4) *Is there an opportunity for collaboration at the second scoping meeting? Everyone seems to have projects they want to get funded, so perhaps at that meeting we could have people break into work groups to develop priorities.*

Agree. Work groups could certainly be developed around specific themes, or there are a number of other ways to organize working groups.

5) *What is the role of USGS in the LCC?*

USGS will be helpful on leading discussion and facilitating discussion about science needs. There are a number of other ways the USGS can assist the LCC; Kate Kitchell offered to outline the potential role in a separate memo, and that memo is attached as Appendix 3.

Additional comments and suggestions:

- (FWS): There are no tribes represented here today, even though there are over 30 tribes located within the Southern Rockies LCC, and they would certainly be an important partner. The tribes in this area have thousands of years of traditional knowledge which would be of tremendous value. Research by archeologists and anthropologists will also be extremely helpful. Many of the reservations also have Mule deer, eagle habitat and other T and E populations, and FWS has provided funding to several tribes for research. I understand that you've started to do outreach with the tribes, but their absence here is notable. Hopefully in the future they will be able to attend meetings. I'm prepared to get involved with the steering committee to try to engage the tribes, and I'm happy to see that travel reimbursement will be made available.

- (BIA): There are also hunting and fishing areas and cultural/historic areas on tribal land. It's also important to note that we are already talking about landscape conservation with the two biggest energy resource tribes. BIA will remain engaged, even without designated funding.
- (Defenders of Wildlife): There are many endangered species studies in AZ/NM that can contribute to the LCC. We're prepared to assist, and will try to engage appropriate Mexican agencies as well.

Initial Priorities for the Southern Rockies LCC

Comments/suggestions from participants:

- (CO Div of Wildlife): One of the issues we have to contend with is how to prioritize. LCC covers half of Colorado. What is the potential of the LCC to generate a map of "hot spots" or trouble spots, where we're likely to see major impacts from climate change?
- I'm concerned about long-term continuity of the effort – will it outlast this administration and current funding commitments? We need to dedicate some thinking to the development of a strong value statement that can be passed on to future administrations and continue to gain support, since later administrations are going to want to see results and compare this approach to the old way of doing business. Some initial thoughts about this statement:
 - What have we learned from the process?
 - How has this new way of doing business improved our capacity for conservation delivery?
 - What are the tangible improvements to natural resources or toward creating additional resilience for wildlife and on-the-ground changes?
- Adaptive management has to be a priority, and we need to have measurable outcomes. I envision two levels of adaptive management – 1) natural resource management on the ground, and 2) the effectiveness of the LCC itself. We need to figure out how we measure this?
- At the LCC level, we need to identify the most vulnerable species/ecosystems and what is most at risk. How are priorities going to change to address these issues? We need to develop a set of strategies for these in the context of climate change.
- We need to bring more attention to how the science gets incorporated in a more holistic way; it's not just about how to "do the science".
- Trust responsibilities is an important consideration. The sense from the states is that we feel somewhat threatened by the way this is starting. States have a significant role to play, and all current participating agencies have funding. I don't want to lose sight of what we want to get out of this. I see a broad research emphasis, but it's unclear to me what is the end product. The Western Governors' Association (WGA) asked the scientific community to focus on identifying crucial habitats and corridors within the Western US. We run the risk of not including the social aspect until we can make it applicable and can tell the public what we are doing. Slowing down and looking carefully at the objectives is very crucial.

- In the other three LCCs, data integration and access has emerged as a central challenge. How do we bring this all together? What information is important and how do we make it more accessible? And how can we do this in coordination with other LCCs?
- I heard a lot this morning of “I’m doing this”, and a willingness to share. We don’t yet see a strong presence from the land managers. What they need is a “1-800-SCIENCE” phone number – a clearinghouse where people can go for information. A lot of the answers are available, but it’s often challenging just trying to find the right information.
- Starting with the science delivery does not make sense to me. The order should be: 1) Identify areas for conservation needs and priorities; 2) take an inventory of what tools you have and how they can be useful; and then 3) identify gaps or questions where science can be helpful.
- We need to focus early conversations on conservation areas of need. We also need to focus on vision/goals more than objectives; which should be measurable. In my view, we’re not quite there yet. Many agencies and NGOs already have visions/goals. There could be complications if we develop this for LCC. Maybe LCC goals are focused primarily on information – how we define, obtain, and disseminate information.
- In order to move forward within the given timeline, we need to look at what other LCCs have done, and try to avoid reinventing the wheel. The Great Northern LCC has a well developed vision and charter, and other LCCs may as well. It would be helpful to have some of the people on the Southern Rockies LCC who have been involved in other LCCs, so that they can bring forward this experience and integrate that perspective into the draft charter for the Southern Rockies.
- The purpose of the LCC should be to support and facilitate what agencies are already doing. I don’t want to spend forever on developing a vision statement. Using documents from other LCCs should make this easier, so that we can get to the fun part – the work on the ground.
- For outreach over the next couple of months, we should target, in particular: the Tribes, State water managers, academics, Regional Offices, leaders in New Mexico and Arizona, and the Intermountain West Joint Venture. We should consider having meetings in different locations or by webinar. Otherwise, it may be difficult for State partners to participate.
- Steering committee needs good representation from NGOs, state and federal agencies, academic and research institutes; we should also seek a balanced mix of the key resource issues or discipline areas (e.g., water, wildlife, climate change).

Summary of key priorities:

- Map of climate change impacts (“hot spots”)
- A strong value statement
 - What have we learned?
 - How has this new model contributed to conservation delivery?
 - What have been the actual on the ground improvements?
- “1-800-GOT SCIENCE” (clearinghouse)
- Emphasis on adaptive management

- More attention to the *application* of science
- Focus on vulnerable species and ecosystems
- Emphasis on sharing among a community of practitioners
- Enhanced consistency with prescribed land use planning processes (e.g. NEPA)
- Data sharing and access
- Science Delivery/Conservation Delivery

Next Steps after this meeting:

- 1) Udall Foundation will distribute notes to all participants (by 7/16)
- 2) Power Point presentations, and any other related documents will be posted to the BOR website; links to the site will be provided in the meeting notes (by 7/16)
- 3) FWS and BOR will form an interim steering committee of volunteers, with appropriate representation of all interests
- 4) FWS and BOR will organize regular (bi-weekly?) phone conferences (July – September)
- 5) The interim steering committee will help plan and organize the next LCC meeting (SRLCC II), likely in Arizona or New Mexico in the fall

Potential Interim Steering Committee Tasks (bi-weekly calls):

- 1) Refine priorities and objective, define a vision
- 2) Discuss/ recommend appropriate long-term organizational structure
- 3) Plan SRLCC next meeting (fall 2010)
- 4) Discuss the recommendation of establishing the idea of setting up a 1-800-SCIENCE-type clearinghouse
- 5) Identify and reach out to agencies, interests who are not currently engaged
- 6) Identify potential work groups or subcommittees

Volunteers for the interim steering committee:

- Steve Ferrell, Wyoming Game and Fish
- Dave Anderson, Colorado Division of Wildlife, Four State Natural Heritage Foundation
- Tom Nessler and Tom Schreiner, Colorado Division of Wildlife.
- Barry Baker, TNC, Canyonlands Research Center
- Janet Wise, Ben Bobowski, and Stephanie Burkhart, National Park Service
- Brad Udall, Kristen Averett, and Joe Barsugli – Western Water Assessment

Appendix 1: Meeting participants – Southern Rockies LCC Scoping Meeting

- Kevin Johnson (FWS)
- Dick Beeman (BOR)
- Avra Morgon (BOR)
- Tom Ryder (WGFD)
- Linda Anania (BLM)
- Tom Nesler (CDOW)
- Pam Repp (FWS)
- James Broska (FWS)
- Dave Hamilton (USGS)
- Michelle Shaughnessy (FWS)
- Barry Baker (TNC)
- Matthew Anderson (GCMRC)
- Tom Schreiner (CDOW)
- Susan Linner (FWS)
- Robert Wogington (TNC)
- Dean Randle (FWS/NWRS)
- Curt Brown (USBR)
- David Anderson (CNHP)
- Janet Wise (NPS)
- David Busch (USGS)
- Kate Kitchell (USGS)
- Ben Bobowski (NPS)
- Tom Chart (FWS)
- William Walker (BIA)
- Betsy Neely (TNC)
- Lee Grunau (CNHP)
- Jim Kircher (USGS)
- Fred Noack (USFS)
- Tom Iseman (WGA)
- Suzanne Paschke (USGS)
- Joseph Barsugls (CU/WWA)
- Josh Avey (AZGFD)
- Melanie Woolever (USFS)
- Mike Canning (WDWR)
- Claudia Regan (USFS)
- Kim Greenwood (FWS)
- Kara Gillon (Defenders)
- Joe Seidenberg (SWERI)
- Patricia Lambert (USGS)
- Madeleine West (WGA)
- Betsy Herrmann (FWS) (via conference line)
- Stacy Hamburg (Sierra Club) (via conference line)

Appendix 2: List of regional conservation partnerships identified by participants

- CO/NM Decision support system
- Native seed facility (sagebrush restoration)
- Wildlife protection program (CO)
- Invasive spp. Program (CO)
- Bark Beetle Cooperative (CO)
- CO River basin study (TNC)
- Upper Colorado River Basin Watershed Assessment
- Canyonlands Research Center (TNC)
- Eco-regional assessments (TNC)
- WY Landscape Conservation Initiative (WLCI)
- WY Conservation easement program
- WY Statewide sage-grouse conservation plan (plus local working groups)
- WY State wildlife action plan
- Mule deer program (Platte Valley, WY)
- Strategic Habitat Conservation Plan (WY)
- WY Range-Wide aquatic species management plan
- Climate Change Initiative (WY/USGS)
- National fish habitat assessments
- GIS-based decision support system (WY)
- Colorado National Heritage Program/other state heritage programs
- Southwest climate change initiative (TNC, feds, universities)
- Utah partners for conservation and development
- Intermountain West Joint Venture
 - Decision support system for avian habitat
- Restoring Forested Headwaters (FS)
- Intermountain West Climate Change (Rocky Mountain Research Station – Forest Service)
- Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (Forest Service)
- Forest Service Landscape Conservation Initiative (Restoring Forested Headwaters)
- Forest Service researchers west-wide climate change initiative
- Climate Change Scorecard (FS)
- Front Range Fuels Partnership
- AZGF wildlife modeling pilot project
- Western Water Assessment
- Endangered Fish Recovery Programs
 - Upper Colorado
 - San Juan
- NRCS Sage-Grouse Initiative
- WGA pilot project – modeling (wildlife)
- BLM Eco-regional Assessments
- Western Regional Partnership (DOD)
- Transmission corridor study
- USGS Science Centers
 - Water resources, biology, geography, geology)
 - Climate change

- Aquatic ecosystem monitoring program (USGS)
- National climate change and wildlife science center (USGS)
- Climate science centers (USGS)
- San Luis Valley refuge partnerships program
- Great Outdoors Colorado
- Refuge partners program
- BLM renewable and restoration programs
- Healthy landscapes initiative
- Native plant seeds program (BLM)
- Invasive species strategic plan (BLM)
- BLM land exchange programs
- NatureServe programs
- Habitat partnership programs
- Owl mountain partnership (BLM)
- Gunnison CCAA initiative (BLM)
- CESU partnership system
- Inventory and monitoring partnerships (NPS)
- Southwest Ecological Restoration institutes
 - Ecological Restoration Institute - Northern Arizona University
 - Colorado Forest Restoration Institute - Colorado State University
 - NM Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute - NM Highlands University
- WGA climate adaptation
- Western States Water Council