

APPALACHIAN

LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION COOPERATIVE

SPRING 2013

The Spring 2013 Newsletter details the decisions and collaborative efforts that took place at the Appalachian LCC Steering Committee Meeting & Workshop, the review and revision of the Science Needs Portfolio, the assembling of vital datasets to help conservation planning efforts, and more.

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LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION
COOPERATIVES

**APPALACHIAN LANDSCAPE
CONSERVATION COOPERATIVE**

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Steering Committee Provides Guidance for Coordinated Action at Appalachian LCC Meeting & Workshop

The Appalachian LCC Steering Committee came together in Blacksburg, VA on April 22-24th to assess progress made toward achieving objectives in its [5-Year Work Plan](#) while providing recommendations for further coordinated action to move the partnership forward.

Steering Committee members representing federal and state agencies, a tribal nation, and NGOs worked diligently in groups to accomplish major Appalachian LCC goals. Members collaborated to begin to deliver landscape-level conservation plans, develop data sharing strategies, promote opportunities for enhanced engagement, and help align programmatic efforts to support the various partner's conservation goals and actions. They also took part in several general sessions that consisted of fruitful discussions and lead to major decisions on outstanding issues and the future direction of the Cooperative.

One of the major issues discussed was a boundary change proposal by the Central Hardwoods Joint Venture (CHJV). After an extensive consultation process over the years with managers, scientists, key stakeholders and partners, the Steering Committee came to a consensus decision regarding the boundary change request to move the eastern lobe of the CHJV range out of the Appalachian LCC and under the Gulf Coastal Plains & Ozarks (GCPO) LCC. Based on recommendations that came out of the process and expert opinions, the Committee decided it was in the best interest of the resources and for the new approach of landscape conservation to maintain the boundary as it currently is. A major point raised in this decision was that many experts saw the need to manage entire ecosystems – both terrestrial and aquatic - as a whole to sustain ecosystem functions and recover endangered fauna. The Appalachian LCC will recommit efforts in working with the CHJV and the GCPO LCC on conservation planning, monitoring, and collaborative efforts.

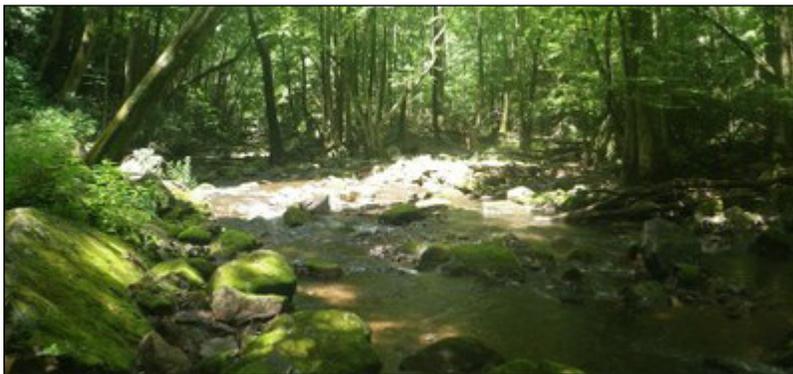
During the Workshop portion of the meeting, Steering Committee members collaborated within Work Groups charged with determining the best ways to accomplish major Appalachian LCC goals. One group focused specifically on a process to identify appropriate natural resource indicators and “surrogate” species

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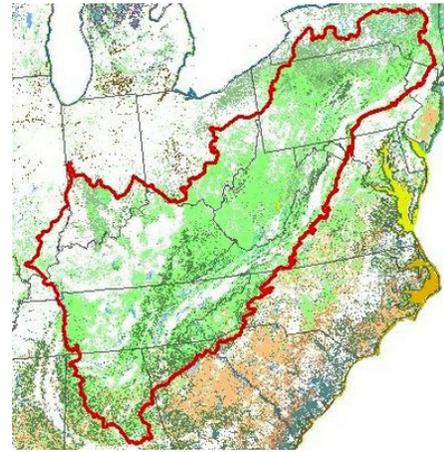
to help inform and assess management activities at the landscape-level. The process established a small oversight team to build off existing efforts and to create an initial list of potential indicators and measurable targets to be reviewed, revised, and finalized as recommendations. A second group tasked with aligning partner's programmatic interests, goals, and actions is advancing the identification of previously assessed high value conservation target areas. A third group will address, coordinate, and develop model data agreements while a final group is identifying target audiences and crafting messages that encompass the value of the Appalachian LCC and opportunities it can provide. Read through the Steering Committee Meeting & Workshop major decisions, meeting notes, and background materials.

[Read through the Steering Committee Meeting & Workshop major decisions, meeting notes, and background materials.](#)



Natural and Social Science Experts Review and Revise Science Needs Portfolio

In February 2013, almost 50 experts from a wide range of technical background in both natural and social sciences, as well as geographic expertise across the entire region, volunteered to participate in the annual review of the Appalachian LCC [Science Needs Portfolio](#). This year marked the first revision of the Portfolio - the Appalachian LCC catalogue of the top science needs that helps the Cooperative effectively address the conservation challenges and opportunities across the landscape. The Portfolio informs the Cooperative on the most pressing needs to guide funding allocation that supports conservation planning, delivery, and applied research as well as monitoring efforts. It also compiles recommendations based on on-going or emergent needs and reflects completion of previously funded projects. This year's revision was accomplished through the Appalachian LCC Web Portal that assembled the various technical groups or "Communities of Practice" (COP) to review and revise the conservation needs across the region.



Datasets Assembling on Web Portal to Support Conservation Planning Efforts

A plethora of geospatial datasets is being assembled to provide partners consistent data delivery in regards to spatial extent, data projects, and metadata. Working with the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture, the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership, and Clemson University, large geospatial datasets are beginning to populate the Appalachian LCC Web Portal. Along with these datasets, a funded [data needs assessment project](#) will deliver several additional databases of spatial data for inclusion on our portal. Altogether, these datasets have been curated specifically for the Appalachian LCC geography and will support future conservation planning efforts. The goal is to provide access to datasets through the Appalachian LCC web portal for the conservation community's use by this summer and to cover the following overarching themes:

- **Ecological Systems** (*Land Cover, Habitat Mapping, Species Distributions*)
- **Human Threats** (*Naturalness, Human-Land-use Footprint, Energy Development*)
- **Other Threats** (*Climate change, Fire, Spread of Disease/Pests/Pathogens*)
- **Existing Assets** (*Protected Areas, Conservation Easements*)

SARP Enhances Collaboration among Regional Partnerships by Launching Companion Site within Appalachian LCC Web Portal

The Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP) has just launched a companion website as part of the Appalachian LCC Web Portal that is allowing for the integration of resources and sharing of valuable datasets and products among partners. SARP is a regional collaboration designed to strengthen the management and conservation of aquatic resources in the southeastern U.S. The new site “went live” May 20, and will provide SARP with a vast amount of outreach and management support including time sensitive funding announcements, online application submissions, private workgroup spaces to share preliminary products, and storage and dissemination of developed products. The new site will also strengthen coordination and communication among members. SARP joins the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture as another regional partner [Visit SARP’s website](#).



High-Level Presentations Detail Appalachian LCC Evolution and Future Direction

Over the past several months, Coordinator Jean Brennan, Steering Committee Chair David Whitehurst (Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries), and Vice Chair Paul Johansen (West Virginia Division of Natural Resources) gave several significant presentations to regional directors and high-level administrators across the eastern U.S. to discuss the evolution and future direction of the Appalachian LCC. During these talks, the three touched on the conservation challenges in the Appalachians, the composition and collaborative nature of the Cooperative, development of the Appalachian LCC Science Needs Portfolio, 5-Year Work Plan, and Web Portal, and the Cooperative’s funded projects that are addressing the top science needs in the region. The first of these presentations was delivered by the Steering Committee Chair and Vice Chair as invited speakers at the Northeast Wildlife and Fisheries Administrative Association meeting prior to the Northeast Fish and Wildlife (NEAFWA) Annual Conference in New York. This regional conference attracts hundreds of natural resources professionals and consists of over 50 workshop sessions.

The Chair, Vice-Chair, and LCC Coordinator also presented to the Regional Directorate and staff of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Northeast Regional Office in Hadley, MA and the Southeast Regional Office in Atlanta, GA. Each presentation was well attended and many insightful questions were asked throughout, reflecting the strong interest in the activities of the Appalachian LCC. [View a recorded version](#) of the presentation given during the USFWS Northeast Regional Office presentation on the Web Portal.



New Items on Appalachian LCC Web Portal

[Appalachian LCC 2012 Annual Report](#)

[Data Needs Assessment Project Update Webinar](#)

[Data Sharing and the Appalachian LCC Web Portal Webinar](#)

[Partner and Affiliate Showcase Pages](#)

[New Research and Project Home Pages](#)

[Voices from the Appalachian Community](#)

PROJECT PROFILE: Support for Understanding Land Use and Climate Change in the Appalachian Landscape

Periodically our newsletter will profile recently funded LCC projects. This quarter the profile spotlight falls on the climate change vulnerability assessment project.

This Appalachian LCC funded research project is laying the critical groundwork for climate change vulnerability assessments within the Appalachian region. Led by Drs. Bruce Young and Lesley Sneddon of NatureServe, the project is compiling vulnerability assessments and other relevant information on species and habitats to recommend the most effective and appropriate methods for adoption by the Cooperative and its partners for conservation and adaptation planning.

“These assessments will help land managers in their decision making on where to target scarce conservation resources to best allow vulnerable species and habitats to adapt to a changing climate,” said Sneddon.

NatureServe has just completed the first phase of this vital research, where an assembled Panel of climate experts combed the literature to discern the most appropriate methodologies for use in the Appalachian LCC region. The Panel divided up into 3 subgroups with the first reviewing the literature on vulnerability assessment methodology. The second dug into downscale climate data, determining what is available and how to best use it. The third group developed criteria to help partners decide what species and habitats to include in the assessments. From this foundational research, NatureServe and the Panel developed a report with the Panel’s findings that is currently in review.

The final step of the project is finalizing which species and habitats to include and then deploying the chosen methodology to conduct vulnerability assessments. NatureServe has compiled a database of over 600 species and habitats - including bats, birds, flowering plants, freshwater mussels, salamanders, and more - that have recently been assessed in portions of the Appalachian LCC region for use in this endeavor. Upon completion of the assessments, a new database will be developed to house them and will be accessible to partners on the Appalachian LCC Web Portal. [Learn more about the Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment Project.](#)



(Photo of Alder Flycatcher by Bill Hubick)

Science Coordinator Recognized for Leadership and Integral Role in Development of Cooperative

Bridgett Costanzo was recognized at the 2013 Appalachian LCC Steering Committee Meeting for her leadership and coordination efforts during her 2-year tenure as Science Coordinator. Chair David Whitehurst and National LCC Coordinator Doug Austen praised Bridgett, whose detail comes to an end in June, for her role in helping to identify science needs, develop research projects, and deliver information and tools to the broader conservation community as well as conducting personal outreach at both the regional and national level. The Steering Committee acknowledged Bridgett’s contributions, noting she has brought to the job superb skills as well as extensive experience in conservation delivery and program administration that has been pivotal in helping to inform the direction of the Appalachian LCC. On behalf of the entire Steering Com-



mittee, the two thanked Bridgett for her dedicated service that has helped to build a key component of the national LCC network during this critical and transformational period in defining the Nation’s conservation direction.