

Landscape Conservation Cooperatives In Alaska

Advancing Science, Understanding Change
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Highlight: Aleutian and Bering Sea Islands Landscape Conservation Cooperative

In September, Douglas Burn accepted the position as Coordinator for the Aleutian and Bering Sea Islands Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC). Previously, Doug served as Interim Coordinator and was instrumental in the early initiation stages of the LCC.

Interim Science Coordinator Vernon Byrd passed the baton to Verena Gill in September. Verena has extensive experience working with sea otters and seabirds throughout Alaska and is a great addition.

The Interim Steering Committee (Committee) has held two meetings in Anchorage, with remote participants in Homer, Unalaska, and Seattle. The Committee currently is comprised of six entities including five agencies (four federal and one state) and one Alaska Native Tribe. The LCC is excited to have the Qawalangin Tribe of Unalaska participating and additional tribal outreach is a focus for the LCC staff.

Currently, the Committee is drafting a charter and conservation goals and a presentation is planned for the Alaska Marine Science Symposium in January.



Doug Burn, Coordinator



Verena Gill, Interim Science Coordinator

Landscape Conservation Cooperatives

Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) are self-directed partnerships that link science with conservation actions to address climate change and other stressors within and across landscapes. They complement and build upon existing science and conservation efforts – such as fish habitat partnerships and migratory bird joint ventures – as well as water resources, land, and cultural partnerships. While LCCs will not assume other partner responsibilities or supersede agency decision-making, they will provide the scientific information needed to help inform the development of strategic conservation actions.



Terrestrial boundaries of the five LCCs within Alaska; marine boundary of Alaska LCCs shown in teal blue. Inset shows distribution of LCCs across the North American continent.

Arctic Lake Vulnerability Assessment



Land managers will soon have a data set for envisioning what a future Arctic Coastal Plain may look like as far as thaw lake distribution and abundance goes.

With funding from the Arctic LCC, Ben Jones from the U.S. Geological Survey and Guido Grosse from the University of Alaska Fairbanks, undertook an effort to identify lakes on the western Arctic Coastal Plain that are likely susceptible to drainage.

Using a combination of remote sensing data, data on surficial geology, permafrost character, and historical rates of lake expansion, they developed a model that projects the likelihood of each lake draining by 2025, 2050, and 2100.

The project is nearing completion and the investigators are in the final stages of data analysis. Results will be posted at www.arcticlcc.org once they are finalized.

Landscape Conservation Cooperatives in Alaska is a quarterly newsletter to share information about LCCs within Alaska and provide updates on their accomplishments.

Western Alaska Landscape Conservation Cooperative Announces Pilot Program

The Western Alaska LCC will focus its 2012 project funding efforts on a Pilot Program to demonstrate the LCC's added value to addressing science and information needs of current decision makers. The program will enhance existing and planned partner efforts that address common themes. The Pilot Program will focus on shared science needs to benefit both near-term decision making by the partners and the long-term ability to address climate driven changes.

Western Alaska LCC Project Is Ready For Snow



Anne Orlando, Wildlife Biologist at Selawik National Wildlife Refuge (Selawik NWR), recently finished a Western Alaska LCC-funded project installing a dispersed network of nine remote snow sampling sites spanning a large portion of the Western Arctic caribou herd's winter range. This essential infrastructure allows for long-term monitoring of snow characteristics in this previously unsampled region of western Alaska.

The data will be used to assess and refine several current projects that predict aspects of winter conditions from remote sensing data and in an array of proposed and on-going ecological and wildlife studies. Ultimately, the results are expected to be applicable to modeling winter conditions for the Nulato Hills, Seward Peninsula, Selawik NWR, and the Western Arctic National Parklands.

Data from the remote sites (snow depth markers and temperature sensors) will complement other ground-based snow courses that will be regularly monitored through collaboration among Selawik NWR, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, a high school science class in Ambler and potentially other schools, and the Native Village of Buckland. The project is creating a new alliance of data users, building capacity, and enhancing climate change and ecological research in western Alaska. Matching funds and in-kind support provided over one-third of the budget.

Project Partners include: Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Bureau of Land Management Central Yukon & Kotzebue Field Offices, Native Village of Buckland, Natural Resources Conservation Service, National Park Service Arctic Network, Northwest Arctic Borough School District, University of Alaska Fairbanks, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group.

North Pacific Landscape Conservation Cooperative

In 2011, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Bureau of Indian Affairs led the early formation of the North Pacific LCC. John Mankowski, formerly Governor Gregoire's natural resources policy advisor, is now serving as the LCC Coordinator. Mary Mahaffy has accepted the position as Science Coordinator. A special thank you goes to Mary for helping move the LCC along during its early phases.

The Charter Steering Committee (Committee) includes nine federal agencies (eight U.S. and one Canadian), four state representatives, one British Columbia provincial ministry and three participating Tribes, with 13 other Tribes interested. The Committee is developing the LCC's governance and structure, goals, and priorities. Subcommittees are being established and will likely include Science/Traditional Ecological Knowledge, Tribal/First Nations, Stakeholders, and Communications subcommittees.

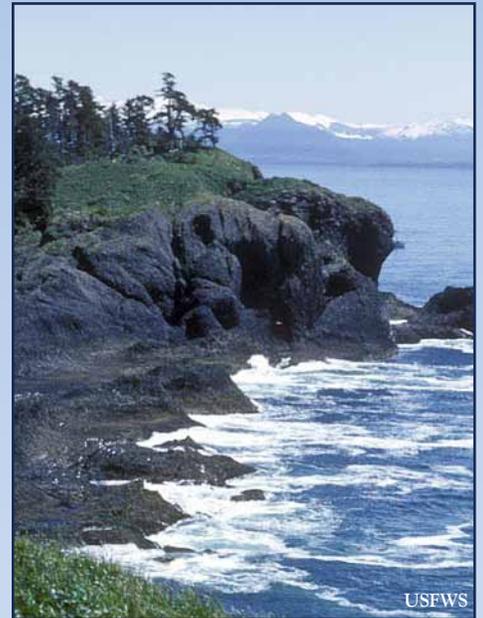
The Committee recently completed a structured decision-making workshop to clarify the LCC's scope and role in providing management-relevant science to a broad range of partners engaged in conservation and resource management decisions. They also reviewed the current knowledge about scientific uncertainties regarding how climate change should be incorporated into management decisions, and worked on LCC organization, objectives, and priorities. This ground work will help ensure that the LCC serves as a credible and vibrant forum for science and information exchange among agencies and stakeholders, including three overlapping Climate Science Centers (Alaska, Northwest, and Southwest).



John Mankowski, Coordinator



Mary Mahaffy, Science Coordinator



LCCs and Climate Science Centers

LCCs and Climate Science Centers (CSC) work closely together. CSCs will provide the latest climate science foundation and data, and help LCCs develop modeling tools and conduct site-specific studies of climate impacts and species and habitat responses.

LCCs will use this information to develop landscape-scale conservation plans that inform conservation delivery activities and assist partners in focusing their management decisions and conservation actions. In turn, LCCs will provide CSCs information on species and ecosystem responses to climate change and the effectiveness of their conservation actions.

In 2011, the Alaska CSC welcomed Stephen Gray as the Director. Currently, the Alaska CSC science plan is being reviewed by the National Climate Change and Wildlife Science Center.

The Alaska CSC is closely working with LCC coordinators in Alaska to refine priorities into specific questions or themes to develop a one-year step down plan.

Northwestern Interior Forest Landscape Conservation Cooperative

The Northwestern Interior Forest LCC is officially up and running after holding its first Interim Steering Committee meeting in October. Partners from various agencies within the LCC discussed the LCC in general and the early initiation steps.

Amanda Robertson, Interim Science Coordinator for the Northwestern Interior Forest LCC, presented extensive information to the group about climate change within the LCC and tools for landscape planning in the context of uncertainty.

One of the first tasks for the LCC Interim Steering Committee is to identify and invite Canadian and Tribal partners to participate. Additional partners will continually be identified as the LCC takes shape. Governing documents, conservation goals, and information gaps will also be the focus at the next meeting in December.



LCC Contact Information

For more information and to learn how you can participate, please contact the LCC coordinators in your area.

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