

Eastern Tallgrass Prairie and Big Rivers Landscape Conservation Cooperative

Landscape Conservation Cooperatives Overview

The sustainability of natural and cultural resources and landscapes are important to quality of life and local economies.

Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) address large scale natural resource challenges that transcend political and jurisdictional boundaries and require a networked approach to conservation—holistic, collaborative, and grounded in science – to ensure the sustainability of America’s land, water, wildlife and cultural resources.

LCCs collectively form a national network of land, water, wildlife, and cultural resource managers, scientists, and interested public and private organizations—within the U.S. and across our international borders—that share a common need for scientific information in conservation.

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The Eastern Tallgrass Prairie and Big Rivers LCC is dedicated to addressing the conservation challenges of a heavily agricultural landscape that stretches across the nation’s heartland from southwest Ohio westward across to parts of eastern Kansas, Oklahoma and Nebraska and northward into segments of Iowa, South Dakota and Minnesota.

European settlers moving west across a young America discovered rich, rolling, fertile lands and ample farming opportunities in the area that would become America’s “cornbelt.”



Left: Tallgrass prairie at Marais des Cygnes National Wildlife Refuge. Right: Freshwater mussels from upper Mississippi River. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service photos.

Millions of acres of forest and prairie were cleared, plowed and put into agricultural production.

While the geography associated with the Eastern Tallgrass Prairie and Big Rivers LCC is predominantly agricultural and privately owned, the area also contains numerous state and federal- managed tracts of land including national wildlife refuges, state wildlife management areas, land trust parcels and nature preserves, which provide habitat for a wide variety of aquatic and terrestrial species of wildlife.

Many agricultural practices have begun to address conservation challenges, establish wildlife habitat and conserve forested lands within this agricultural landscape. State and federal programs have also worked to restore small and fragmented woodlands and protect critical riverine corridor habitat for fish and wildlife.

The landscape is home to some of America’s premier rivers including the Mississippi, Missouri, Illinois, Wisconsin, Ohio and Wabash as well as a wide variety of lakes and reservoirs.

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For more information:
<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/climate/LCC/ETPBR/>

Geographic Area



Geographic area defined by the Eastern Tallgrass Prairie and Big Rivers Landscape Conservation Cooperative outlined in red.

2012 Activities

Interim steering committee members include:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Midwest Region and Mountain Prairie Region); Illinois Department of Natural Resources; Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife; Iowa Department of Natural Resources; Kansas Department of Parks and Wildfire; Missouri Department of Conservation; Nebraska Game and Parks Department; Ohio Division of Wildlife; Minnesota Department of Natural Resources; Oklahoma Department of Wildlife; South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks; Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources; The Nature Conservancy; Natural Resources Conservation Service; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; Chicago Wilderness; Illinois Natural History Survey; Fish Habitat Partnerships; U.S. Geological Survey; Ducks Unlimited; Pheasants Forever; Land Trust Alliance; National Park Service; U.S. Forest Service; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency;

and Upper Mississippi River and Great Lakes Joint Venture.

Interim committee members are currently working with the U.S. Geological Survey Northeast Climate Science Center to gather input from the Midwest scientific community to establish wildlife-related research priorities. Additional projects supported by the LCC are underway this year. Ongoing research projects include:

Remote sensing Mississippi River remote sensing

The Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Geological Survey, and many river partners along the Illinois and Mississippi rivers are partnering to collect infra-red digital imagery during periods of peak vegetative growth to develop a cover map for the Mississippi River flood plain from Minneapolis, Minn. to the Ohio River confluence. This information will be used to identify changes within the basin over the past 10 years, strategically guide biological programs in support of natural resource conservation,

and assist in making science-based decisions within the Mississippi River basin.

Aviation and remote sensing programs

The efficiency and effectiveness of aerial photography by the Service's Midwest Aviation Program will be improved with upgraded components for the Applanix DSS 439 Camera System. These upgrades will ultimately assist decision making by biological programs to support natural resource conservation.

Refining freshwater mussel conservation techniques

Early life stage survival in propagated mussels averages less than five percent. Through the installation and operation of a mobile rearing system using river water, this study will compare the relative survival of newly transformed juveniles using treated river water versus hatchery water.