

The Acronyms of Conservation

By Steven Krentz and Richard D. Nelson

Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) and Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHPs) are recent additions to the acronym dictionary. Many may not have a full understanding of what they are and what they're doing; much less how they can and are working together. The LCCs and FHPs have recently arrived on the conservation front to help pull together a more strategic and holistic approach to conservation of our natural resources. While the acronyms are new, the concepts and practices have been a part of conservation since the earliest days.

The FHP's started forming several years ago, however, in 2006, these efforts finally had a coordinated effort outlined through the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. The primary purpose was to organize and begin implementing a conservation strategy that essentially mirrors the successful methods being used for the waterfowl migratory management (Joint Ventures) that has been so successful at the landscape level. This focused effort for the aquatic habitats is being done by using the available science and strategic implementation in order to encourage the various entities in the conservation community to work together and find ways to engage the local communities.

When Landscape Conservation Cooperatives were first being discussed and developed, numerous questions were raised from the field about what they were intended to accomplish potential partnership overload, and duplication of scientific efforts. Of course, overriding the whole implementation was the question "how do they fit together?" We've had partnerships that range from the Mule Deer Foundation and Ducks Unlimited, to partnerships for migratory birds, a newly developed partnership for the aquatic habitats, and now, here folks were trying to develop a science partnership via LCCs. We knew our partners were wondering how these existing partnerships would fit with the LCCs and this was a question consistently raised during the early evolution of the LCCs. As well, some wondered what the motives could be, since the primary modus operandi for many was using a partnership approach. Why was this latest partnership, the greatest thing ever conceived since sliced bread??

LCC's are designed to provide scientific and technical support for conservation at "landscape" scales-the entire range of an identified priority species, groups of species and their habitats. LCCs support biological planning, conservation design, prioritizing and coordinating research, and designing species inventory and monitoring programs aimed at addressing global climate change and other landscape level stressors. The partnerships formed via LCCs will identify common goals and priorities and will deliver conservation tools to enhance efficient and effective conservation efforts. The concept of LCCs is formed around the idea that 21st Century conservation challenges can't be successfully addressed by a single agency or conservation group. Thus, LCCs are designed to enhance existing partnerships and leverage resources from a wide variety of sources in order to promote a landscape scale response to these new challenges.

By functioning as network of interdependent units rather than independent entities, LCC partnerships can accomplish a part of the conservation mission, no single agency or organization can accomplish. LCCs are cooperative, partnership-oriented entities focused on developing, adapting and coordinating large-scale data and models for field-level use. This became evident as the Fish Habitat Partnerships were starting to develop priorities for conservation delivery. The lack of consolidated information, applicable

to the landscape level, became abundantly apparent. It's not that the data weren't being collected; it's just that much of the data were being analyzed and reported on a state by state or local basis and not a scale that was applicable to the species or habitats in question from a landscape perspective. It was like trying to put together a puzzle without having an idea of what the picture was supposed to be. Each puzzle piece was well understood at the local level; however, the overall picture was still unknown.

The Great Plains Fish Habitat Partnership and the Plains and Prairie Pothole Landscape Conservation Cooperative have teamed up and are working jointly to advance this regional assessment. With funding and support from the Plains and Prairie Pothole Landscape Conservation Cooperative, the Partnership will be working with the various State, Tribal, Federal, and other local interests to put together the available information important to the aquatic resources to fully understand what the data **are** depicting for the Great Plains rivers. It's like putting the cover picture on all those pieces of the puzzle. Once this is understood, it'll greatly assist conservation efforts by allowing the interested parties to see where the priorities across the area are for protection, enhancement and restoration. This will provide natural resource agencies an opportunity to put limited, but valuable funding where it will provide the best benefit for the aquatic species.

The cooperative efforts underway between the Plains and Prairie Potholes LCC and the Great Plains Fish Habitat Partnership represent the incredible potential available to meet 21st Century conservation challenges. The opportunities to enhance existing partnerships and form new working relationships are a key aspect of both the LCCs and FHPs. A strong relationship has already been forged between the Plains and Prairie Potholes LCC and the Great Plains Fish Habitat Partnership. We anticipate similar relationships and cooperative efforts with other Service programs and projects will become part of the working model for effective conservation delivery.

If you would like more information on the Great Plains Fish Habitat Partnership, the Plains and Prairie Potholes LCC and our shared conservation efforts please contact Steven Krentz or Rick Nelson. (Steven_Krentz@fws.gov ; Richard_D_Nelson@fws.gov.)