

**Upper Susquehanna Conservation Alliance**  
**January 13, 2015**  
**Meeting Highlights**

**Meeting Objectives:**

**Present and discuss request for proposals for the USCA funding opportunity.**  
**Break into USCA work groups to discuss long-range planning for 2015-2016.**

Project Proposals for the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) \$49K – The applicant's presented their respective projects to the USCA members and the members were given a chance to ask questions. Presentations were given by:

- Jim Curatolo (hellbenders): USC proposes to: 1) collect eggs in PA and transfer to NY to promote genetic diversity, 2) support SUNY ESF grad student to collect and headstart hellbenders for release, and 3) use natural stream design techniques to reduce sediment loads and enhance habitat by installing nest boxes.
- Amy McMillan and Robin Foster (hellbender): Propose hellbender studies including eDNA analysis, genotyping and parenting analysis, and field work to determine the species' presence.
- Paul Lord (pearly mussel): Propose to reintroduce American eels in the New York section of the Susquehanna to serve as hosts for pearly mussels. Identify small waters in the western Susquehanna watershed for eels.
- Walt Keller and Scott George (fish passage device): Propose to study the effectiveness of a perched culvert design for upstream movement of brook trout.
- Kris West (Logan Hill Nature Preserve): FLLT will acquire a 290-acre property to conserve and provide access for outdoor education and recreation. The site would benefit reptiles and amphibians, as USC has constructed vernal pools on the property, alongside woodcock and grassland birds. Proposal includes funding to pay for survey/conservation easement.
- Mike Jura (Apalachin Creek/Stephens Stream Bank Rehabilitation Project): Proposes to stabilize and adjust alignment of a 500-foot section of severely eroded stream using a method called longitudinal peaked stone toe protection and provide stream bank rehabilitation training in the process.

**Work Group Breakout Session Objectives:** Work groups include the Natural Resources Working Groups (Hellbender, Brook trout, and Mussel), the Landscape Conservation Work Group, and the Flood Work Group. Two new work groups were formed – Outreach and Communications Work Group that will be

led by Andrea Bruns of USFWS and a Woodcock Work Group or Early Successional Habitat Work Group. The groups reported on their efforts planned for 2015.

- Landscape work group – We received insight from Mike Slattery regarding new data sets from North Atlantic LCC and funding ideas for the Chesapeake Bay watershed and the Upper Susquehanna River headwaters. Pat Raney discussed current GIS projects on wetlands. Kris talked about FLLT initiatives. Land trusts are looking for funding opportunities on a larger scale (Bay-wide). Kris gave details about their new acquisition (Logan Hill) and showed a presentation to the group that contained maps that the USFWS NYFO made for them and how they are using the data. Janet Thigpen (STCRPDB) is looking for information regarding undeveloped floodplains that could be protected. Patrick Raney (TWT and USC) provided information regarding current GIS work that he has been doing for USC/TWT for wetlands (fens).
- Brook trout group's first priority is to determine presence/absence throughout the watershed.
- The outreach work group is developing a website to be hosted by USFWS. It will provide basic group information on a main page and have work group subpages that each group can use to facilitate group information, sharing, and communication.
- Flood work group wants to identify areas for protection and develop a package of outreach and training materials to be used for website development and training events.
- The new woodcock work group is looking into project opportunities and people to join their work group.
- The mussel work group is developing a database where they can share GIS files.
- The hellbender work group will continue monthly conference calls. The group's goals are to continue the headstarting program and surveys, both of which would benefit from additional funding.

**Agreed Upon Action Items:**

1. A selection committee will take information provided in today's proposals and meet within 2 weeks to make a decision on funding.
2. The Hellbender work group continue with monthly conference calls, continue the headstarting program and protocols, continue eDNA work, and conduct rocklifting surveys this upcoming field season. The work group has spoken to the Pennsylvania Field Office about building the headstarting program in Pennsylvania. They will also connect with the Susquehanna River Heartland Coalition for Environmental Studies in Pennsylvania who works on researching the

ecological conditions and processes in the watershed of the Susquehanna River and its tributaries; Website: [www.srhces.org](http://www.srhces.org).

3. The Landscape Conservation work group - Andy will start an email list for the landscape work group to use to stay in touch.
4. The Flood Work group will update contact list, develop a flood web page for the USCA site with help from Outreach group and identify areas (floodplains) for protection. The USCA group can send information (i.e., documents, fact sheets, training materials, etc.) to Janet for the webpage and any undeveloped floodplain parcels for acquisition.
5. The Mussel Work group will continue to work on database, eel work, respond to waste spills, identify sites for denitrification production, and explore pearly mussel aquaculture. They will work with Tioga County to find sites and seek funding for denitrification project.
6. The Brook trout work group agreed to discuss priorities and policy development and conduct surveys.
7. The Outreach work group will send out minutes, updates, training/funding opportunities, partnership needs, and opportunities. The group needs to generate a list of external audiences. Since everyone has different target audiences, backgrounds, and contacts, USCA members outside of the work group should share insight with Andrea in order to help establish a list of contacts.
8. Work group leads should make sure that priorities move forward through conference calls or meetings and be able to report out at the next meeting (potentially in the fall). Contact lists should be sent to FWS.

#### **LINKS OF INTEREST-**

Chesapeake Conservancy - <http://www.chesapeakeconservation.org> and an older fact sheet on stream functions pyramid at:  
<http://www.fws.gov/chesapeakebay/Newsletter/Fall11/Pyramid/Pyramid.html>