

Putting Science in the Right Places

National Geographic Framework for Landscape Conservation

In the face of escalating conservation challenges such as land-use conversion, invasive species, water scarcity, and a range of other complex issues -- all amplified by accelerated climate change -- the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, with support and cooperation from the U.S. Geological Survey, is developing a national geographic framework for “putting science in the right places” to conserve our nation’s fish and wildlife resources.

Just as flyways have provided an effective spatial frame of reference to build capacity and partnerships for international, national, state and local waterfowl conservation, the national geographic framework will provide a continental platform upon which the Service can work with state and other partners to connect project- and site-specific efforts to larger biological goals and outcomes. By providing visual context for conservation at “landscape” scales—the entire range of a priority species or suite of species—the framework helps ensure that resource managers have the information and decision-making tools they need to conserve fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats in the most efficient and effective way possible.

Geographic Areas

The 22 Geographic Areas comprising the framework map (see attachments) were developed by aggregating Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs), biologically based units representing long-standing partnerships that facilitate conservation planning and design at landscape scales. BCRs also can be partitioned into smaller ecological units when finer-scale planning and design are necessary. Some BCRs (e.g. Hawaii) were not aggregated and stand-alone as Geographic Areas. The Geographic Areas also incorporate Freshwater

Ecoregions of the World as a standard unit for aquatic species considerations—the same framework adopted by the National Fish Habitat Action Plan—as well as existing ecological units (Omernick’s Level II) to account for a variety of terrestrial species’ needs. In most Geographic Areas, the boundaries of key partnerships are left intact to preserve existing conservation and science capacities.

Working With Partners

During the next 12-18 months, the Service Directorate Deputies Group will identify a process for engaging employees, states and other partners to consider refinements to the framework. The Deputies Group will also determine definitive boundaries for a South Florida Geographic Area (tentatively outlined in bright green on the framework map) and consider incorporating marine ecosystems into the framework.

In addition, the Service will work with states and other partners to use the framework as a base geography for determining locations for Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) in FY2010 and in planning a second generation of LCCs during the FY2011 budget formulation process. LCCs are conservation-science partnerships between the Service, federal agencies, states, tribes, NGOs, universities, and other entities. They provide science support to managers and partnerships responsible for developing and implementing conservation strategies at landscape scales, with an emphasis on biological planning and conservation design; acquisition of biological and spatial data, research and related activities.

The national geographic framework is the latest in a series of key steps taken

by the Service and Survey to meet 21st Century conservation challenges by ensuring that we accomplish the right things, in the right places, at the right times based on sound science. These efforts parallel changes occurring across the conservation and science communities as states, tribes, nongovernmental organizations, and other stakeholders recognize similar challenges and work together to preserve our nation’s fish and wildlife heritage.

To view available materials and information, visit:
<http://www.fws.gov/science/she/index.html>

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