

Questions and Answers related to SHC and LCC Form, Function and Operation from the Appalachian SHC Workshop

January 2010

1) *Would like to see some “professional SHC Practitioners” provide more immediate feedback to a smaller number of presenters. I’m currently suffering from PowerPoint overload and would enjoy fewer presentations with more analysis, critique, and discussion.*

Some of the evaluations from the workshop presented similar views. The planning committee for the next SHC workshop will be restructuring presentations and breakout sessions, based on the many suggestions.

2) *Can we include outreach in the SHC wheel? When folks learn about their successes and failures in the monitoring and evaluation phase, it would be great if other scientists could also learn from these successes and failures.*

Outreach is an essential part of SHC and LCCs. Outreach to our partners, other federal agencies, NGOs, the private sector, the public and to our own employees is essential to for the entire SHC wheel to work and accomplish the objectives of our landscape conservation efforts.

The LCC will provide a forum for information exchange and feedback among the partners involved and, secondarily, among other interested parties (e.g., organizations, scientists, managers and stakeholders). The process for how this information exchange will occur has not been defined. The Steering Committee will establish protocols for how science and information needs are communicated to them for decision-making, within the context of prioritizing LCC core staff action; the partnership at large will also have an opportunity to identify their desired communication pathways between the LCC (core staff), the Steering Committee, and the partners at large. There is an expectation that there will be tri-directional communication between the various entities within the overall partnership.

Scientific credibility of LCC products (i.e. data collection) will be subject to peer review through publication in peer-review outlets, such as the *Journal of Fish and Wildlife Management* and *North American Fauna*. Each LCC will have a coordinator that will facilitate the link between science and planning, and facilitate the link between operations and partners. The coordinator will ensure that data is shared with other LCC, field stations, partners, other Federal agencies, etc.

States, along with other Federal agencies will be essential partners in an LCC. LCC capacities will be designed to be compatible with other LCCs; thus ensuring that LCC products, including data platforms, for a wide-ranging species can be used effectively across geographic area boundaries. Additionally, LCCs will draw upon, and augment, the existing science capacities of partners and partnerships.

3) *Whose job will it be to design a species monitoring protocol which can detect population level changes through habitat management actions across an LCC? Who will conduct surveys and who will analyze the data? How will refuges within an LCC participate in this process?*

Individual agency field stations, including individual National Wildlife Refuges, will play multiple roles within the larger LCC partnership, including assisting in identifying science priorities and priority species, evaluating LCC products, providing scientific and technical support, designing and implementing research programs, performing management evaluations and in delivering conservation through resources available at their current facilities. Within the construct of the core LCC infrastructure, agency field stations will feed their specific science needs through their management chains to the LCC Steering Committee for consideration, prioritization, and possible action.

It is important to note that, due to the physical limitations of the LCC core science and technical staff and available resources, it will not be possible to address all science needs immediately. As a result, the LCCs will necessarily need to identify priorities (e.g., species, habitats) upon which they will engage in biological planning, conservation design, inventory and monitoring program design, and other types of conservation based scientific research planning and coordination. These priority species/habitats will be selected based on a number of factors, including species status, range, management need and efficacy, agency priorities and the like; ideally, they should represent a suite of species with similar habitat requirements – such that the priorities focus on providing the greatest conservation benefit with the limited resources available. It will be imperative that conservation designs developed for these priority species/habitats be evaluated to determine whether or not the assumptions included (including benefits anticipated to the suite of species) are valid. Agencies at all levels including field stations will, through implementation and monitoring of their conservation efforts, provide feedback to the LCCs regarding the effectiveness of the conservation designs developed to ensure appropriate adaptive management occurs, and to determine whether additional efforts are needed to ensure species needs are addressed.

4) *Will presentations be available on the intranet? Can PowerPoint presentations be available on a specific site or SharePoint site, such that they are accessible to all?*

All presentations will be available on the Regions SHC website. Also included on the website are notes from the breakout sessions, attendance list, agenda, and Qs/As from the workshop.

5) *Reality is that USDA dollars drives conservation on private lands. What are your thoughts on how we can get USDA on board with SHC?*

That could possibly be done at the Department level considering the wide spread support from the Secretary and the engaging Interior agencies. On the ground level in the Service's Partners Program, we can be working with USDA demonstrating the benefits of approaching private lands on a landscape level. The LCCs will play an important role in helping partners (States and other Federal agencies) in establishing common goals and priorities, so they can be more efficient and effective in targeting the right science in the right places. Products developed by LCCs will inform the actions of partners and interested parties in their delivery of on-the-ground conservation.

6) *On priority watersheds, have any efforts been developed to the point to where we can measure progress toward achieving some defined biological efforts? Have measurable population objectives been developed for any of the focal species? Have conservation design tools been developed to help determine the most important places to work on the ground?*

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The LCC products and services will utilize various tools and systems to address management issues within the landscape. These may include:

- 1) Integrated data for seamless spatial modeling of species and habitats, within and across geographic area boundaries.
- 2) Population models linking fish, wildlife, and plant populations to habitat, other limiting factors, and various ecological processes.
- 3) Assessing, modeling and predicting the ability of landscapes to support and sustain priority fish, wildlife and plant populations.
- 4) Maps that display potential corridors linking present and future habitats, incorporating considerations of conservation genetics.
- 5) Shared data platforms facilitating information exchange.

6) Decision analysis tools for complex conservation problems.

7) *How are we considering other agencies mission in this process?*

Core missions will not change. The Service and other DOI bureaus will play key leadership and catalyst roles in developing and operating LCCs. The Service anticipates that LCCs will be supported by funding, staffing, or in-kind services from entities involved in conserving fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats within the geographic area, including other DOI bureaus, other federal and state agencies, private organizations, universities, and others.

8) *If the Service is going to lead SHC and LCC, what is the Service leadership doing to bring State, NGO, and other Federal partners on board with this concept? Will funding or staffing support be given to partners for LCC implementation which is outside Service jurisdiction?*

States will be essential partners, along with other federal agencies (especially USGS and other DOI bureaus), tribes, and private organizations. The role of partners in the structure and function of LCCs needs to be considered within the context of two levels: 1) Establishment and operation of the core LCC science and technical support staff (technical working group) and Steering Committee. 2) Establishment of landscape-level partnerships and implementation of strategic on-the-ground conservation efforts; and

Within each specific geographic area, the Service and interested partners will engage in efforts to implement strategic on-the-ground-conservation efforts through individual and collective partnerships at various scales. Each partner, including the Service plays an important role in determining what its priorities are, what benefits it will realize from participating in such efforts, how it will engage (e.g., providing funding, in-kind services, seeking and implementing projects to restore, protect, manage habitats and associated species, conduct outreach/education activities, etc.). As part of this effort, discussions will also occur through which the Service and these partners identify science and information gaps that prevent effective implementation of these conservation efforts. The establishment and operation of core LCC science and technical support staff, and the Steering Committee is intended to address these science and information gaps to make the partners' efforts more efficient and effective – with the goal of restoring and maintaining sustainable fish and wildlife populations and the habitats they rely upon at a landscape-level within and across these geographic areas.

Existing Service and partner personnel will play key roles in identifying science priorities and priority species, evaluating LCC products, providing scientific and technical support, designing and implementing research programs, performing management evaluations and in delivering conservation through resources available at their current facilities. The LCC will provide a forum for information exchange and feedback among the partners involved and, secondarily, among other interested parties (e.g., organizations, scientists, managers and stakeholders). The process for how this information exchange will occur has not been defined. The Steering Committee will establish protocols for how science and information needs are communicated to them for decision-making, within the context of prioritizing LCC core staff action; the partnership at large will also have an opportunity to identify their desired communication pathways between the LCC (core staff), the Steering Committee, and the partners at large. There is an expectation that there will be tri-directional communication between the various entities within the overall partnership.

9) *Does an SHC approach exclude what has been referred to as an “opportunistic approach”, or does it incorporate aspects of being opportunistic as a part?*

LCCs will provide scientific and technical support to inform landscape-scale conservation using adaptive management principles. LCCs will engage in biological planning, conservation design, inventory and monitoring program design, and other types of conservation based scientific research planning and coordination. LCCs will play an important role in helping partners establish common goals and priorities, so they can be more efficient and effective in targeting the right science in the right places. Products developed by LCCs will inform the actions of partners and other interested parties in their delivery of on-the-ground conservation.

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10) *Someone mentioned doing less delivery and more monitoring due to funding limitations. Do we have buy-in from Congress, partners, and funding agencies to deliver less science of higher quality?*

Scientific credibility of LCC products will be subject to peer review through publication in peer-review outlets, such as the *Journal of Fish and Wildlife Management* and *North American Fauna*. Each LCC will have a coordinator that will facilitate the link between science and planning, and facilitate the link between operations and partners. The coordinator will ensure that data is shared with other LCC, field stations, partners, and other Federal agencies, etc.

11) *Obviously, TNC is a major player and partner and has been involved in landscape planning for decades. I want to be sure that folks don't think due to the similarity of process – similar “wheels” that they are redundant. TNC goals are biodiversity, species richness, and ecosystem resilience. Service goals are sustainable populations of trust species.*

The Nature Conservancy will continue to be a major player in partnering with the Service in landscape issues. The similarity of process will strengthen the LCC in each geographic area. The LCC network will accomplish conservation objectives that no single LCC, nor any agency or organization, could accomplish alone. A secondary function of LCCs will be building interdependent partnerships to develop shared conservation goals and satisfy shared science needs.