

*A new vision for
conservation into
the future*

The Southeastern Conservation Adaptation Strategy

The Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (SEAFWA), the Southeast Natural Resources Leadership Group (SENRLG), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs), and partnerships like SARP and the Joint Ventures across the Southeast Region, are launching an effort to develop a coordinated regional conservation adaptation strategy.



Isla Caja de Muertos, Puerto Rico by Alan Cressler ©

Between now and 2050, more than half the nation's population growth and an estimated 65 percent of its economic growth will occur in 10 mega-regions across the country, according to projections laid out by Georgia Tech's Center for Quality Growth and Regional Development.

The Atlantic Piedmont Mega-Region is monstrous. It stretches south from north central Tennessee and Nashville to Birmingham and then northeast from central Alabama to include Atlanta, a big chunk of central Georgia, a corridor taking in Greenville-Columbia-Spartanburg in South Carolina to Charlotte, North Carolina, and the research triangle of Raleigh. It's tied together by existing and future transportation and communications networks and takes into account recent and future population settlement trends.

What makes this even more pressing is the need to establish sustainable fish and wildlife populations for

future generations, especially in the face of increasing stressors that go beyond population growth and urban development to include energy development, habitat conversion, land management and ownership changes, and accelerating climate changes related to temperature, precipitation and sea level rise among others. Over that same time period, we expect to lose to development an amount of land equal to the size of South Carolina.

“Escalating pressure is being placed on the Region’s fish, wildlife and other natural and cultural resources. The time is upon us all to be more collaborative and strategic in targeting our collective conservation activities to achieve broader landscape-level conservation goals in the context of our individual conservation missions.”

Ed Carter, Executive Director
Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency



*Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge by
USFWS/Garry Tucker*

These changes and emerging trends promise significant challenges for the environment – straining existing natural resources we all need to ensure healthy communities natural and otherwise. That’s why a coalition of natural resource partners are now coming together to identify the desired conservation landscape of the future. Why now? Because the landscape is on the verge of being identified for us. Decisions are being made and our conservation community is not always at the table. One need only take a quick look at the Atlantic Piedmont Mega-Region to see what the future looks like in terms of population and urban growth if the region’s conservation community fails to engage now.

These are among the driving reasons why in late 2011 and 2012, the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (SEAFWA), the Southeast Natural Resources Leadership Group (SENRLG), LCC partners across the Southeast Region, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other existing regional conservation partnerships, launched an effort to develop a coordinated regional conservation adaptation strategy.

The strategy is being called a Southeastern Conservation Adaptation Strategy (SECAS). It builds on a Century-long legacy of innovative, ground-breaking conservation that has positioned the conservation community to take this next critical step. We are facing environmental changes that are occurring faster than our ability to respond to them in some cases. The focus of SECAS is to develop a collaborative approach to ensure a future for fish and wildlife through expanded science capacity and more robust planning for land managers, so we can make better long-term habitat management decisions.



Looking Glass Falls, Looking Glass Creek, Pisgah National Forest, NC by Alan Cressler ©

A New Vision for Conservation into the Future

SECAS will build upon conservation planning efforts already in place to develop a vision and strategies needed to sustain fish and wildlife populations into the future with a changing landscape. These tools include State Wildlife Action Plans, bird conservation plans, the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, The Nature Conservancy’s Eco-Regional Plan, and newer planning efforts such as EPA’s Healthy Watersheds Initiative.

Current conservation priorities will be focused regionally and will become better informed with additional data including projected changes in urban growth, down-scaled climate data, and sea-level rise. Projections will be used to identify priority species and ecosystems in need of conservation action as well as those most vulnerable to systemic changes.

Much of the scientific and technical information needed to undertake a regional conservation adaptation strategy will be provided by conservation partners that make up six LCCs, the region’s Climate Science Center (CSC), and other traditional and non-traditional partners. We will leverage these partnerships and their collective resources by empowering them to collaborate within existing and new networks to integrate new science

information and tools that resource managers can use to define, design, and deliver the conservation landscape of the future.

One component of an adaptation strategy is the Southeast Regional Assessment Project being developed by the South Atlantic LCC and the Southeast Climate Science Center. This project utilizes a structured decision-making process informed by scientific and socio-economic data and simulation models to evaluate multiple conservation objectives and identify the most effective conservation measures that should be used to achieve those objectives. In the future, this pilot project may be expanded to other LCCs in the Southeast.

By working together, partners can build on each other’s strengths to develop a strategic vision for conservation of the future. One that will provide a science-based and adaptive framework to help, for example, conservation managers make better, long-term management decisions that meet individual and collective conservation goals for sustainable fish and wildlife populations across the Southeast Region.

As this bold effort to design the conservation landscape of the future and engage a broader group of partners and planners moves forward, you can engage, learn more and follow the process at <http://conservationadaptation.org>.

To Learn More

Internet resources:

Landscape Conservation Cooperatives
Gulf Coastal Plains and Ozarks
gcpolcc.org

South Atlantic
southatlanticlcc.org

Peninsular Florida
peninsularfloridalcc.org

Appalachian
apple.org

Gulf Coast Prairie
gulfcoastprairielcc.org

Caribbean
caribbeanlcc.org

Southeast Climate Science Center
doi.gov/csc/southeast/index.cfm

State Wildlife Action Plans
teaming.com/state-wildlife-action-plans-swaps



Mallard ducks on the Chattahoochee River, Georgia by Alan Cressler ©