

RESOLUTION # 2018-06-07

FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AT LANDSCAPE SCALES

WHEREAS, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (Association) recognizes the important role and unique responsibility of state, provincial and territorial fish and wildlife agencies in conserving fish and wildlife and their habitats;

WHEREAS, many fish and wildlife species occur and complete their life requirements within ecological systems that cross state, provincial and/or territorial boundaries;

WHEREAS, landscape-scale conservation efforts are characterized by conservation of connected and healthy ecological systems, use of science-based and culturally sensitive conservation planning, collaborative network structure and meaningful multi-sector stakeholder engagement;

WHEREAS, the Association recognizes the need for state, provincial and territorial fish and wildlife agencies, federal agencies, tribes, private landowners and conservation groups to collaborate at landscape scales;

WHEREAS, existing landscape-scale conservation efforts like National Fish Habitat Partnerships, Migratory Bird Habitat Joint Ventures, Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, Climate Adaptation Science Centers, Regional Integrated Sciences and Assessments and others were established to address the challenges of managing certain suites of fish and wildlife over large landscapes;

WHEREAS, working at landscape scales can promote system-wide regional, national and international collaboration on fish and wildlife conservation, aid in the recovery or avoidance of federal Endangered Species Act listings, help reduce conflicts, mitigate key stressors and improve regulatory certainty;

WHEREAS, landscape-scale conservation should when possible include collaboration with Provincial, Territorial and Mexican governments;

WHEREAS, agreement on a vision, boundaries, science and coordination, sustainable funding, efficient and effective meetings, strategic communication, involvement of partners including private landowners and strong personal relationships are important elements of landscape-scale collaboration.

LET IT BE RESOLVED, the Association acknowledges the importance of collaborating at landscape scales to help fish and wildlife agencies meet their statutory and regulatory responsibilities to conserve fish and wildlife and their habitats. Furthermore, when collaborating at landscape scales, the Association recognizes the need to establish durable partnerships with strong governance structures that include relevant, engaged and contributing

governmental members, private conservation organizations, private landowners, academic institutions and other partners who recognize the role and authority of state fish and wildlife agencies and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and the special relationship between state fish and wildlife agencies and the Service;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Association supports using the following guiding principles when developing or participating in landscape scale conservation partnerships intended to conserve fish and wildlife:

1. State and federal agencies with management responsibility for fish and wildlife should be considered as peers and integral to development of an initial framework, boundaries and priorities for landscape-scale conservation partnerships.
2. Landscape-scale conservation partnerships should consider a governance model that includes a steering committee or board of directors made up of state fish and wildlife agency directors and leaders of federal agencies or their designees that can set policy and when appropriate include private landowners, private conservation organizations, tribes, academic institutions and other diverse stakeholders to optimize conservation outcomes.
3. Landscape-scale conservation partnerships should seek to conserve ecological integrity that supports healthy and functioning natural communities and working landscapes that conserve fish and wildlife, particularly species of greatest conservation need.
4. Landscape-scale conservation partnerships are complex and require trust, a dedicated coordinator, technical and science development staff and communication expertise. Regular communication from top-to-bottom and bottom-to-top should be a priority.
5. Landscape-scale conservation partnerships should agree on a long-term vision and goals and clear, specific, practical and measurable objectives, performance measures and outcomes to guide work and ensure accountability.
6. Landscape-scale conservation partnerships should seek to address the population status, key threats and habitat and management needs of all fish and wildlife but special consideration should be given to co-developed and shared priorities between State Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, including species of greatest conservation need identified in State Wildlife Action Plans, threatened and endangered species and other priority at-risk species and their habitats.
7. Landscape-scale conservation partnerships should undertake work in the context of the longer term goal of sustaining healthy, connected, and resilient cross-border ecosystems that provide essential ecosystem and societal values for current and future generations

8. Planning, funding and implementing on-the-ground conservation is important to the success of landscape-scale conservation partnerships and should recognize the important role of private landowners, nonprofit organizations and other stakeholders in achieving collaborative and cost-effective outcomes. Technical and management staff from governmental and non-governmental organizations should help direct and deploy implementation.
9. Landscape-scale conservation partnerships should develop and use the best available applied science that is shared, transparent and collaboratively obtained.
10. When possible, landscape-scale conservation partnerships should build upon existing landscape conservation planning and management initiatives undertaken by Migratory Bird Habitat Joint Ventures, Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, watershed organizations and similar partnerships.
11. Landscape-scale conservation partnerships should periodically undergo an evaluation to assess priorities, effectiveness and adaptability so they can be refocused as needed to achieve intended outcomes.

*Resolution submitted by the Wildlife Resource Policy Committee
with a recommendation that it be passed.*