

# Landscape Conservation Collaboration

## *White Paper Addendum*

*September 2018*



ASSOCIATION *of*  
FISH & WILDLIFE  
AGENCIES

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## INTRODUCTION

In March 2018, the landscape conservation working group of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) Wildlife Resources Policy Committee issued a [white paper](#) on landscape conservation. The white paper identified drivers for and barriers to landscape conservation and commonalities of success based on reviews of selected landscape conservation partnerships reviewed within the geographies of the four regional state fish and wildlife associations. The report included the following recommendations:

1. *Establish a working group between AFWA and the US Fish and Wildlife Service leadership to identify immediate opportunities to continue and expand work on shared landscape conservation priorities through state-led partnerships. Investments in leadership, collaborative approaches, decision-support tools, science and agency capacity are critically needed.*
2. *Extend the charter of the Landscape Conservation Working Group to continue the dialogue and develop additional resources that can be used by policy-makers in the coming year to assess and provide direction on landscape conservation. Alternatively AFWA could engage an Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies-Wildlife Resources Policy Committee partner like the Wildlife Management Institute to coordinate such an effort.*
3. *Expand on the best practices developed in the Northeast to include all regions of the US.*
4. *Host a forum to gather input from broader audiences including NGOs to seek input on the direction and approach to landscape conservation and develop specific policy recommendations related to funding needs and other challenges identified in this report.*

The charter of the landscape conservation working group was extended to implement the recommendations made in the white paper. Following guidance from the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the four regional associations of state fish and wildlife agencies and the FWS began working on processes to co-develop shared priorities for landscape conservation and at-risk species. These discussions were guided by the regional leads of the landscape conservation working group and are detailed below. Regional fish and wildlife associations in the Northeast and Southeast are using or adapting existing processes, the Midwest has developed a new process and the West is exploring options.

The best practices identified in the white paper by the Northeast region were reviewed by the Landscape Conservation Working Group and Wildlife Resources Policy Committee and modified into guiding principles. The leadership of the Network for Landscape Conservation and other key partners reviewed the guiding principles and provided input. The guiding principles will be included in a resolution that will be considered for adoption at the AFWA annual meeting in September 2018.

Finally, a Landscape Conservation Forum was held on August 8, 2018 at Eugene Mahoney State Park in Nebraska. Twenty-six individuals representing members of the Landscape Conservation Working Group, leaders of the Network for Landscape Conservation and others attended the forum. Barriers to landscape conservation collaboration, state and federal fish and wildlife agency authorities, landscape conservation guiding principles and models for landscape conservation were discussed at the meeting. Recommendations were made to continue engaging with the Network for Landscape Conservation and

begin engaging the US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management and share the guiding principles on landscape conservation with regional fish and wildlife associations and others.

## **REGIONAL PROCESSES FOR DEVELOPING SHARED PRIORITIES**

### Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

Northeast State Fish and Wildlife Agency Directors and Region 5 of the FWS are strongly committed to landscape conservation in the region. The Northeast has extensive experience collaborating, including conservation of the New England cottontail, participation in the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture, visioning and conservation design through the North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative and participation in the Regional Conservation Needs (RCNs) program.

Based on experiences with these landscape-level initiatives, the Northeast has identified best practices that characterize the key elements of successful landscape conservation. These are now adapted for consideration at the national level. The Public Trust Doctrine and the associated obligations to natural resource stewardship are the foundation for these principles. Both state fish and wildlife agencies and the FWS have clear public trust responsibilities and landscape conservation constitutes an approach to fulfilling those trust mandates.

The engagement of non-governmental organizations and landowners is a critical element in planning for and implementing landscape conservation at the regional scale. Northeast State Fish and Wildlife Agencies and Region 5 of the FWS have greatly benefited from the participation of NGOs and landowners and are committed to continuing those relationships. Indeed, such collaboration is embedded into agency management culture as evidenced by the engagement of NGOs in the development of State Wildlife Action Plans and the longstanding need to work with private landowners in a geography where almost all lands are privately owned.

As a further example of the productive nature of collaborating with NGOs, the Northeast Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies has directly supported the Wildlife Management Institute in advancing goals to enhance young forest habitats to benefit a wide array of early succession species on private lands. This illustrates that NGOs and landowners are uniquely positioned to deliver landscape-scale conservation on the ground in a highly efficient manner.

Based on the constructive and introspective examination of prior landscape conservation activities, the Northeast Fish and Wildlife Agency Directors and Region 5 of the FWS have validated their strong commitment to conducting large conservation projects using the collaborative/cooperative approach embedded in landscape conservation.

The Northeast region recognizes that effective governance requires sound technical input supported by policy decisions through commitments of funding, staff and in other ways. This includes effective collaboration with non-governmental organizations and landowners. Through the Northeast's RCN process, regional species of greatest conservation need (RSGCN) have been identified. There are overlapping priorities between the RSGCN and species that Region 5 of the FWS are responsible for that can benefit from coordinated efforts to meet mutual priorities at landscape scales. These overlapping priorities will be the initial basis for both short- and long-term landscape conservation planning.

The Northeast Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (NEAFWA) will continue to use the approach adopted in the revised RCN process to identify regional/landscape priorities, along with priorities

pertaining to the conservation of at-risk species in collaboration with Region 5 of the FWS. This includes ensuring that funded projects and collaborative conservation planning and implementation provide synergistic benefits for a wide variety of species and their habitats across the region. NEAFWA and Region 5 of the FWS will continue to engage non-governmental organizations and landowners as conservation partners.

The existing governance structure, consisting of technical committees, state wildlife and fisheries administrators, State Fish and Wildlife Agency Directors and FWS Region 5 leadership has proven to be effective and efficient. This structure will continue to function in its present form and be used to review technical proposals for landscape conservation and at-risk species conservation. State Fish and Wildlife Agency Directors and leaders from FWS Region 5 will remain as the functional steering committee for policy-making for landscape conservation and at-risk species conservation, ensuring effective coordination on overlapping priorities such as at-risk species conservation at landscape scales.

Using the process outlined above, the following shared priorities for landscape conservation have been identified:

- (1) Conservation and management for early succession/young forest species, including New England cottontail, ruffed grouse, American woodcock, whip-poor-will, box turtle, wood turtle, and green snake.
- (2) Conservation actions to benefit wide ranging at-risk freshwater turtles such as wood and spotted turtles.
- (3) Enhancing habitat for pollinators such as frosted elfin by improving management of regionally significant xeric grasslands, barrens, and woodlands.
- (4) Conservation and management to benefit saltmarsh-obligate species, including black rail, American black duck, and saltmarsh sparrow.

These priorities will be revisited and refined at the November 2018 meeting of the Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

#### Southeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

In 2011, State Fish and Wildlife Agency Directors in the Southeast initiated the Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy (SECAS). The initiative was started with an understanding that Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) would support SECAS by providing critical scientific and technical expertise and by providing a forum for collaboration by state and federal agencies and NGOs who shared mutual interests in sustainable conservation landscapes. SECAS was subsequently adopted as a framework for landscape conservation planning by a number of federal agencies in the Southeast through the Southeast Natural Resources Leadership Group.

As support for LCCs came to an end in 2018, the Southeast region recognized the need to re-assess SECAS to determine if it was still valuable and relevant for the region and whether adequate financial and staff support existed to sustain the initiative. With that in mind, Ed Carter, Executive Director for Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency and the Southeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (SEAFWA) liaison to SECAS reached out to State Fish & Wildlife Directors in the region requesting feedback on the future viability and support for SECAS. Following is a summary of the responses to Director Carter's memo:

- There was overall positive support for SEAFWA to continue leading SECAS, and most State Fish and Wildlife Agencies indicated a willingness to continue participating in SECAS activities. However, support was not unanimous, suggesting the need for continued engagement and translation of the initiative and its products to local management outcomes.
- State Fish and Wildlife Agencies indicated a willingness and desire to meet with FWS leadership and FWS Science Applications staff to discuss regional priorities.
- The abrupt termination of LCCs by the Department of Interior has been detrimental to the advancement of landscape conservation efforts in the Southeast. Fortunately, State Fish and Wildlife Agencies in the Southeast have built a strong and enduring relationship with the FWS and there is mutual interest in continuing to facilitate constructive dialog on regional priorities in the region.
- The FWS Science Applications Program in the Southeast is committed to continued science support for critical SECAS functions such as coordination, blueprint development, etc.

SECAS remains the preferred model of collaborative landscape conservation for most State Fish and Wildlife agencies in the Southeast. However, SECAS was built primarily on an organizational model that included loose oversight from SEAFWA, while relying heavily on LCCs for critical science functions and as forums for collaboration among the partner agencies and organizations.

Even when LCCs were fully functional within the SECAS organizational framework, we recognized the need for SECAS coordination, and fulfilled that capacity in 2014 by hiring a coordinator. For the long-term sustainability and success of a regional collaborative effort such as SECAS, continued support for a SECAS Coordinator is believed to be a critical organizational need.

In the absence of LCCs, SEAFWA Directors recognize the importance of re-visiting the organizational and governance framework of SECAS. The Directors have committed to engage in those discussions, to strengthen the governance and organizational structures of SECAS and to re-orient its scientific and technical functions to sustain the effort through the next several years.

While the reorganization is underway, SECAS should also continue to recognize existing regional and landscape-scale collaborative conservation efforts in the Southeast, such as the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership and Migratory Bird Habitat Joint Ventures and seek to provide conservation planning or other services that are not already provided through these other efforts. Opportunities also exist to align SECAS with additional large-scale planning efforts, such as the Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability.

In some respects, SECAS could serve as an important bridge to a new generation of collaborative landscape conservation enterprises, which may play out over the next few years. The National Academy of Sciences concluded in their review of LCCs that “the nation needs to take a landscape approach to conservation”. In the absence of LCCs, SECAS and other regional efforts like it should build on the successes of the LCCs and focus on potential future models of collaborative landscape conservation to further the work that has already been accomplished.

Southeastern State Fish and Wildlife Agencies indicated their support for continuing the SECAS landscape conservation initiative and identified the following priorities for collaboration:

- Work directly with SEAFWA's Wildlife Diversity Committee to support multi-state conservation plans for at-risk species, including federally listed species and species of greatest conservation need identified in State Wildlife Action Plans, species distribution modeling, regional assessments of habitat conditions and regional evaluations of threats or stressors.
- Prioritize working with the SEAFWA Wildlife Resources and Fisheries Resources Committees to improve the aquatic connectivity and terrestrial corridors information currently in SECAS as necessary to meet the needs of all fish and wildlife species.
- Build upon work initiated through LCCs to refine explicit fish and wildlife outcomes and metrics for conservation. Work with staff from SEAFWA member states and other subject experts. Build consensus on key habitat and population indicators that reflect the biodiversity of the region as well as metrics of success.
- Develop on-the-ground demonstrations to gain long-term support for landscape conservation. The Tennessee River Basin is a good model for demonstrating how science can be incorporated into decision-making processes. Other examples include Cerulean warbler conservation and management, Golden-winged warbler partnerships and American woodcock research.
- Support State Fish and Wildlife Agency and FWS programs that address Asian carp and other invasive species that could greatly disrupt and destroy native aquatic high-biodiversity.

#### Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

Over the past few months, a small group of State Fish and Wildlife Agency Directors and FWS Science Applications staff from Regions 3, 4 and 6 have developed co-identified priorities across the region and potential steps that could be taken to meet those priorities. These meetings came about as a result of shifting priorities for FY18 appropriations to the FWS Science Applications program, recalibration of Science Applications Program activities and work undertaken by the AFWA Landscape Conservation Working Group.

These discussions focused on developing short term approaches where state and FWS capacity could make a difference and address the long-term landscape conservation needs through durable partnerships. State Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the FWS identified their respective landscape conservation priorities through discussions, regional meetings and an informal survey.

The original ad hoc committee, made up of State Fish and Wildlife Agency Directors and FWS staff from the AFWA Landscape Conservation Working Group, met informally. Technical staff, identified by those directors and FWS Science Applications Leadership, met between meetings of the ad hoc committee to discuss shared priorities and further refine potential plans to address them.

The group initially had no direct relationship with the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (MAFWA). At the annual MAFWA Directors meeting in June 2018, MAFWA officially took steps to establish an initial governance structure, which included State Fish and Wildlife Agency and FWS

participation. At this meeting, MAFWA approved the establishment of a Midwest Landscape Collaboration Steering Committee with the following charge:

*The MAFWA Steering Committee on Landscape Collaboration will consist of executive level staff with public responsibility for species conservation, legal authority to undertake conservation actions and with decision authority for their respective agency. It will consist of three-to-five MAFWA-member state directors, or designees, identified by the President of MAFWA, and FWS staff from Regions 3, 4 and/or 6, as identified by Regional Directors of those FWS regions. It may also include up to three ex-officio (non-voting) members representing key sector and/or agency partners at the discretion of the Committee. Membership may adapt to changing needs of the committee, subject to approval of MAFWA.*

The Steering Committee will explore shared priorities of MAFWA member states and the FWS and make recommendations regarding identification of those shared priorities and how to best address them. It will further develop work plans to address those recommendations, oversee implementation of approved recommendations and communicate results. The Steering Committee will also make recommendations related to this governance model to the MAFWA Board and FWS leadership.

The Steering Committee will have the authority to appoint a technical committee to support its technical functions and will have the authority to appoint or assign working groups to effectively address individual priorities. The Steering Committee will meet as needed but at least annually. It will make decisions related to work plan development and implementation under authorities granted by the MAFWA Board and FWS leadership. It will also approve any needed Technical Work Groups.

Initial membership will include four State Fish and Wildlife Agency Directors, one of whom will serve as the chair of the steering committee and the three FWS Regional Directors or their designee. The Steering Committee is in the process of populating the technical committee, which will include technical staff of the MAFWA states and the FWS. A FWS staff person will coordinate the meetings and reports to the Steering Committee about progress on the annual work plan which the Steering Committee will review and approve. More expansive representation of partner groups, interested industries and academic institutions is anticipated at the working group level.

The following shared regional priorities were identified for the region:

1. Habitat inventory/assessment. The MAFWA region houses a diversity of natural communities. As a region, it is imperative we strive to conserve the integrity of these systems, including their respective species assemblages, through landscape conservation. In order to achieve this, we must ensure an understanding of their current distribution, abundance, trend and quality across MAFWA states and work to prioritize resource investment toward those natural communities in greatest need of collaborative conservation through identification of conservation opportunity areas in State Wildlife Action Plans and by other means. The conservation community has long discussed the need to develop a tool such as the Landscape Health Index to assess whether or not conservation management actions are successfully creating resilient landscapes. This missing cornerstone assessment is vitally important as we embark on collaborative conservation in order to objectively define desired future conditions, evaluate the health of a landscape over time and inform decision-making regarding the amount and duration of resource allocation toward the landscape.

2. Prioritize at-risk species conservation. Across the MAFWA Region, there is an increasing number of species that are known to be declining and some are requiring substantial state agency resources when petitioned for listing. There is a need for MAFWA to take a strategic approach to 1) address species on the FWS 7 year listing plan and 2) prevent species from being federally listed and petitioned.
3. Wind energy development support. Wind energy development has been promoted and supported across the MAFWA region for a number of years. Renewable energy portfolios, wind energy production tax credits, interests in expanded domestic energy capacity, climate change concerns related to fossil fuels and interest in “green” energy have all contributed to a more recent surge in wind energy development across the region. Wind energy provides great benefits to the economic and environmental health of the region but negative wildlife interactions must be acknowledged and managed appropriately. MAFWA states and FWS are interested in supporting and siting wind development and generating wind based energy in a manner that minimizes or avoids negative wildlife interactions, particularly as it may impact migratory birds and bats, species of greatest conservation need or threatened and endangered species.
4. Governance and strategic planning. MAFWA states and the FWS recognize that landscape conservation is needed because most fish and wildlife species occur and complete their life requirements in ecological systems that cross administrative boundaries. However, working at larger scales requires broader stakeholder engagement, effective communication, transparency and accountability. The best decisions about species or habitats occur when diverse stakeholders contribute to the understanding of the issues and actions taken. The Acting Principal Director of the FWS and AFWA President have tasked the regional associations and FWS Regions to define what successful landscape conservation looks like to help guide what approaches are needed and to overcome challenges to successful landscape conservation. Establishing long-term goals and strategic direction to accomplishing them and developing a governance structure to meet those challenges are essential to the future success of this collaboration.

#### Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

State Fish and Wildlife Agency Directors of the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) met at their annual summer meeting and held a discussion to consider whether a more durable process for shared science prioritization between the States and FWS is needed, particularly around collaborative landscape conservation. The four FWS Regional Directors present at the meeting conveyed the importance of this concept and committed to finding a forum for identifying shared priorities with State Fish and Wildlife Agencies. The FWS Regional Directors shared ways they are already collaborating with States to set those priorities.

State Fish and Wildlife Agency Directors noted that the vast geography and size of WAFWA creates challenges that adds to the complexities of coordinating and establishing shared priorities. WAFWA already plays a large role in landscape conservation and has numerous initiatives underway including the Intermountain West Joint Venture (IWJV), Western Native Trout Initiative (WNTI), Sage brush biome, Lesser Prairie Chicken, Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool and others. The importance of Cooperative Research Units was also emphasized. During the discussion, several shared priorities were identified

including recovery of federally listed species, implementation of State Wildlife Action Plans, sage biome conservation and several species-specific issues.

Questions were asked about where the States want to be in 10-15 years, what forum exists or needs to be created for discussing how to get there and whether or not there might be a better way to coordinate. It was suggested that more formal mechanisms might be needed to create more durable prioritization decisions within and across WAFWA. Interest was expressed in how to create processes that use the value and capacity of existing infrastructure of WAFWA with Migratory Bird Habitat Joint Ventures, Fish Habitat Partnerships, Cooperative Research Units, etc. It was also acknowledged that each state is unique and the needs of individual states may differ.

Some State Fish and Wildlife Agency Directors agreed it would be important to explore this kind of a process while others were not as convinced. One Director pointed out the need to maximize *collective impact* -- a concept from the scientific literature in the non-profit sector where shared interests are brought together to identify common priorities and objectives, work to achieve those, and share success.

As a result of the discussion, WAFWA established an *ad hoc* committee of State Fish and Wildlife Agency Directors to explore options. Following are the issues that will be discussed further by the committee:

- Consider existing “infrastructure” where priorities are set across WAFWA (i.e., CRUs, IWJV and other Migratory Bird Habitat Joint Ventures, WNTI and other Fish Habitat Partnerships, WAFWA working groups, etc.). Coordinators of these efforts could convene and share priorities, conduct a gap analysis once existing priorities are compiled and see what needs are not being met by existing institutions.
- Consider whether a staff person is needed to interact with all the existing landscape initiatives to provide a common thread for WAFWA and serve as a liaison.
- When considering the larger landscape, is there a tool that can be used to combine science to consider a landscape approach and the species that occur within the landscape rather than a species-by-species or state-by-state approach?
- If WAFWA establishes a priority process, a mechanism will be needed to determine who is best to deliver on the priority. WAFWA will need to consider the importance of partners, their networks, knowledge, and presence on the landscape.
- Consider new approaches such as coordinating and using State Wildlife Action Plans and the Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool.
- Look at governance models being used by the other three regional fish and wildlife associations.
- Continue one-on-one calls and meetings between State Fish and Wildlife Agency Directors and Regional Directors and Science Applications staff from the FWS.
- Survey State Fish and Wildlife Agency Directors as appropriate.

The *ad hoc* committee expects to report back at the WAFWA Winter meeting in January with a draft proposal.

## **LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

In the Landscape Conservation White Paper, best practices were identified in the Northeast for landscape conservation collaboration. The Landscape Conservation Working Group reviewed the best

practices and modified them into guiding principles that apply to all regions. The guiding principles were reviewed by leaders of the Network for Landscape Conservation, AFWA's Wildlife Resources Policy Committee and other selected key partners and will be presented as part of a resolution that will be considered for adoption at the September 2018 AFWA Annual meeting. The resolution is included in the appendix. Following are proposed guiding principles for landscape conservation collaboration:

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 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 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 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.

## **Landscape Conservation Forum**

In order to engage, seek input and build relationships with the private conservation sector, the working group hosted a forum on landscape conservation on August 8, 2018 at Eugene Mahoney State Park in Ashland, Nebraska. The purpose of the meeting was to gather input on the direction and approaches to landscape conservation and discuss the process for developing specific policy recommendations to overcome barriers and challenges to landscape conservation collaboration. Twenty-six individuals from the Network for Landscape Conservation (see call-out box), AFWA Landscape Conservation Working Group and selected conservation partners attended the forum.

Presentations were given on the AFWA White Paper on Landscape Conservation and the new approach being used by the FWS for co-developing shared priorities for landscape conservation and at-risk species with the state fish and wildlife regional associations. The participants discussed barriers to collaboration on landscape conservation, state and federal authorities for fish and wildlife, draft guiding principles, processes and partnership structures for landscape conservation and next steps.

Participants shared their experiences and gained a better understanding of each other's rolls in landscape conservation. The draft guiding principles were discussed and many suggestions were incorporated into a revision of the guiding principles. Although the need for a national coordinator on landscape conservation was discussed, there was not agreement on the need or next steps. At the conclusion of the meeting, it was recommended that there be a follow-up meeting after the September AFWA meeting between the Landscape Conservation Working Group and the Network for Landscape Conservation to discuss next steps, continue relationship building and to consider the viability of hosting another forum at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference. It was also recommended that federal partners such as the US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management be engaged and that the guiding principles be shared with regional state fish and wildlife associations and others. The agenda for the meeting and list of participants is included in the appendix.

### **About the Network for Landscape Conservation**

The Network for Landscape Conservation (NLC) connects people to ideas and innovations and each other to build a community of practice for the field of landscape conservation. Launched by the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy (Cambridge, MA) and partners in 2011, and now fiscally sponsored by the Center for Large Landscape Conservation (Bozeman, MT), the Network is led by a 30-person Coordinating Committee of conservation leaders in the non-profit, private, public, academic, and philanthropic sectors in the U.S. and Canada. The Network today includes more than 100 organizational partners and 2,000 individual practitioners. Together, this growing community is developing effective tools and strategies and advancing best practices and policies to help people sustain the integrated landscape systems we cannot live without. The Network for Landscape Conservation advances collaborative, cross border conservation as an essential approach to connect and protect nature, culture, and community.

## **NEXT STEPS**

The following next steps are proposed to continue work on landscape conservation:

1. The Landscape Conservation Working Group or another entity will continue to assist as needed to facilitate processes to identify shared science needs and other priorities for landscape conservation and at-risk species at the regional fish and wildlife association scale.
2. Engagement with the Network for Landscape Conservation will continue and the merits of a second forum at the 2019 North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference or a similar venue will be discussed. If a second forum is held, state fish and wildlife agencies, the Network for Landscape Conservation, federal land management agencies including the US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management and private conservation organizations will be invited to participate.
3. If approved by AFWA, the guiding principles for landscape conservation will be distributed to the regional fish and wildlife associations and other leaders and practitioners working in the landscape conservation arena.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **RESOLUTION-2018**

#### ***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 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 Canadian 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 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 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 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 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.

## APPENDIX 2

Participant list and agenda for the Landscape Conservation Forum held on August 8, 2018 at Eugene Mahoney State Park | Ashland, NE.

Name	Organization	Title
<b>Jim Douglas</b>	Nebraska Game and Parks Commission	Director
<b>Mark Humpert</b>	Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies	Conservation Initiatives Director
<b>Jim Connolly</b>	Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife	Director Bureau Resource Management
<b>Ken Elowe</b>	US Fish and Wildlife Service	Asst. Regional Director, Science Applications
<b>Kristal Stoner</b>	Nebraska Game and Parks Commission	Wildlife Diversity Program Manager
<b>Greg Wathen</b>	Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency	Special Assistant to the Director
<b>Norman Murray</b>	Missouri Department of Conservation	Species and Habitat Chief
<b>Dr. Thomas Eason</b>	Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Com.	Assistant Executive Director
<b>Dr. Benjamin Tuggle</b>	US Fish and Wildlife Service	Assistant Director, Science Applications
<b>Bill Moritz</b>	Wildlife Management Institute	Midwest Field Representative
<b>Virgil Moore</b>	Idaho Department of Fish and Game	Director
<b>Kenny Dinan</b>	US Fish and Wildlife Service	Partners for Fish/Wildlife State Coordinator
<b>Tony Wasley</b>	Nevada Department of Wildlife	Director
<b>Craig Czarnecki</b>	US Fish and Wildlife Service	Assist. Regional Director, Science Applications
<b>Matt Smith</b>	Kansas Department Wildlife Parks Tourism	Regional Wildlife Supervisor
<b>Dave Nomsen</b>	Pheasants Forever	Vice President Governmental Affairs
<b>Michael Barber</b>	Alaska Conservation Foundation	Executive Director
<b>Brenda Barrett</b>	Living Landscape Observer	Editor
<b>Bill Labich</b>	Highstead	Senior Conservationist
<b>Bob Bendick</b>	The Nature Conservancy, Gulf of Mexico	Director
<b>Ernest Cook</b>	Trust for Public Land	Senior VP & Director Conservation Strategies
<b>Gary Tabor</b>	Center for Large Landscape Conservation	Executive Director
<b>John Mankowski</b>	Network for Landscape Conservation	Consultant
<b>Jimmy Bullock</b>	Resource Management Service, LLS	Senior Vice President, Forest Sustainability
<b>Mike George</b>	Ducks Unlimited	NE Director of Conservation Programs
<b>Emily Bateson</b>	Network for Landscape Conservation	Coordinator



Network for Landscape  
CONSERVATION



## Landscape Conservation Forum

Tuesday, August 7, 2018

- 6:00PM- Networking Reception with hors d'oeuvres and beverages in the Lower Level of Peter Kiewit Lodge at Eugene Mahoney State Park - 28500 West Park Hwy, Ashland, NE 68003  
8:00PM

Wednesday, August 8, 2018

- 7:30AM Arrive at Cedar/Red Oak conference room in the Peter Kiewit Lodge at Eugene Mahoney State Park
- 8:00AM **Welcome, Introductions, Review Agenda and Set Meeting Expectations**  
Jim Douglas, Director Nebraska Game & Parks Commission  
Virgil Moore, Director of Idaho Dept. Fish and Game & AFWA President  
Emily Bateson, Coordinator Network for Landscape Conservation
- 8:15AM **Presentation:** Overview of barriers and challenges identified in the AFWA white paper on landscape conservation and draft guiding principles  
Jim Douglas, NGPC and Mark Humpert, AFWA
- 8:35AM **Presentation:** The changing playing field: New processes for identifying shared federal-state landscape conservation and at-risk species priorities  
Dr. Benjamin Tuggle, US Fish and Wildlife Service
- 9:00AM **Introduction to Discussion Topics** Bill Moritz, Wildlife Management Institute
- 9:05AM **Discussion Topic:** *What are the barriers to collaboration on landscape conservation between state fish and wildlife agencies, federal land management agencies and the private sector?*
- 9:30AM **Discussion Topic:** *Given the management authorities of state fish and wildlife and federal land management agencies, how can the NGO community advance landscape conservation to help address barriers and challenges faced by agencies?*
- 10:00AM BREAK**
- 10:15AM **Discussion Topic:** *Are the AFWA landscape conservation partnership guiding principles sufficient to help guide future collaborations?*
- 11:00AM **Discussion Topic:** *Which existing or new processes, landscape conservation partnerships and other organizational structures can be used as models for facilitating collaboration between the private sector, state fish and wildlife agencies and federal land management agencies on landscape conservation?*
- 12:00PM LUNCH**
- 12:30PM **Discussion Topic:** *How can the challenges to collaborating on landscape conservation be overcome? Are additional guiding principles needed?*
- 2:00PM **Discussion Topic:** *What next steps should we take (including development of policies) to advance public-private collaboration on landscape conservation?*
- 3:00PM ADJOURN**