

Blueprint for a climate-resilient landscape

January 20, 2016

Core Team Meeting #1 – Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Brad Bales, Pacific Birds, Executive Director

Diane Barton, Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission, Water Quality Coordinator

Barb Bresson, US Forest Service, Wildlife Biologist-Avian Conservationist

Jeff Breckel, Lower Columbia Fish Recover Board, Executive Director

Jim Brick, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Implementation Coordinator, Lower Columbia River Recovery Plan for Salmon and Steelhead

Carla Cole, National Park Service, Acting Chief of Integrated Services

Leslie Connelly, Washington State RCO, Natural Resource Policy Specialist

Catherine Corbett, Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership, Chief Scientist

Lisa DeBruyckere, Creative Resource Strategies, President

Paul Dye, The Nature Conservancy of Washington, Director of Marine Conservation

Sara Evans-Peters, Pacific Birds, Conservation Planner

Jackie Ferrier, USFWS, Project Leader

Laura Gephart, Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, Watershed Programs Coordinator

David Graves, Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, GIS Specialist

Lynn Helbrecht, Washington DFW, Environmental Policy and Climate Change

Amy Horstman, USFWS, Fish and Wildlife Biologist

Chuck Houghten, USFWS, NWRS Lands Division Chief

Dave Howe, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Jason Karnezis, Bonneville Power Administration, Fish and Wildlife Project Manager

Meaghan Kearney, USFWS, Communication Specialist

Christopher Lapp, USFWS, Project Leader – Ridgefield NWR Complex

Lauren Leuck, US Army Corps of Engineers,

Esther Lev, The Wetlands Conservancy, Executive Director

John Mankowski, NPLCC, Coordinator

Steve Manlow, Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board, Salmon Recovery Program

Scott McCarthy, USFWS, Refuge Planning Branch Chief

Alex McManus, PC Trask and Associates, Inc., Natural Resource Planner

Tom Miewald, USFWS-NPLCC, Geographer

Glynnis Nakai, USFWS, Refuge Manager

Kevin O'Hara, USFWS, Conservation Planner

Andy Pampush, Bureau of Land Management, Environmental Coordinator

Garrett Phillips, Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce, Associate Coastal Planner

Ken Popper, The Nature Conservancy, Senior Conservation Planner

Ethan Rosenthal, David Evans and Associates, Project Manager/Ecologist

Rudy Salakory, Cowlitz Indian Tribe, Aquatic Habitat Restoration Program Manager

Jennifer Siani, USFWS, Fish and Wildlife Biologist

Darlene Siegel, Environmental Science Associates, Senior Restoration Biologist

Khem So, USFWS, Conservation Planner

Mike Strobel, USDA, National Water and Climate Center Director

Chris Swenson, USFWS, Coastal Program – Pacific Regional

Steve Waste, USGS, Western Fisheries Research Center Laboratory Director

Melissa Watkinson, The Nature Conservancy, Marine Policy Fellow

Stephen Zylstra, USFWS, Assistant Regional Director – Science Applications

Via Webinar:

Trina Bayard, Audubon Society - Washington

John Bragg, Pacific Marine and Estuarine Fish Habitat Partnership

Jena Carter, The Nature Conservancy - Oregon

Rhonda Dasher, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Fish and Wildlife Biologist

Ann Edwards

Tom Iverson, Yakima Nation

Mary Mahaffy, North Pacific Landscape Conservation Cooperative

Lisa Phipps, Tillamook Estuaries Partnership

Paul Wagner, US Army Corps of Engineers

Karl Weist, Northwest Power and Conservation Council

Bart Wickel, Stockholm Environment Institute

- I. The goals of the meeting were to develop a shared understanding of process and how interested stakeholders will work together, through leadership of the Core Team, to develop a project plan for the “Blueprint for a climate-resilient landscape” initiative in the lower Columbia River, northern coast of Oregon and southern coast of Washington as well as achieve consensus on a draft geographic scope and scale, working vision of the initiative, and key next steps. The project plan will be used to solicit funding for FY16 and beyond.

- II. John Mankowski, NPLCC Coordinator, kicked off the meeting clarifying the interests/intent of the initiative, emphasizing the collaborative nature of the project. John described the need to achieve conservation goals for focal species and habitats within the lower Columbia River and coasts of Oregon and Washington, noting that there is no unified landscape-scale conservation blueprint for the region that identifies valued resources and considers the impacts of large-scale stressors on those resources. That challenge creates opportunities for interested entities to work together to identify valued resources, assess the impacts of stressors (including cumulative stressors), and create a conservation blueprint to guide management actions to achieve common conservation outcomes.

- III. Tom Miewald, USFWS/NPLCC, gave an overview of landscape conservation design, noting that assumptions are made that people will actually implement plans, nature will be stable, data is available, reserves are “enough,” and conservation organizations are “enough” to address conservation needs. Landscape conservation design proposes solutions that move from planning to design. LCD involve:
 - People that span jurisdictions and sectors (initial team, core team, technical advisors, and stakeholders);
 - Processes that include convening, assessing, prototyping, and designing;
 - Products that include spatially explicit models and strategy documents; and
 - Action implemented through co-governance and coordination that results in collective impacts.

Tom also noted that many LCD projects have in common the use of Conservation Measures Partnership’s Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation, which includes five steps – conceptualize; plan actions and monitoring; implement actions and monitoring; analyze, use, adapt; and capture and share learning.

He noted the five conditions of collective impact include a common agenda, i.e., shared vision, shared measurement, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and backbone support.

IV. Ken Popper from The Nature Conservancy gave a presentation on ecoregional assessments and terrestrial resilience, noting areas that are important for conservation are identified, and key concepts include all biodiversity, habitats, species, current condition, and all ownerships. The ecoregional approach includes:

- Selecting conservation targets (species, communities, ecological systems)
 - Ecological systems (coarse filter)
 - Communities (fine filter)
 - Species (fine filter)
- Setting conservation goals (number and distribution)
 - Goals are stratified by section
 - Species are based on distribution and rarity (global rank) – higher goals for rare species and habitats
- Assessing cost or suitability (size, condition, landscape context)
- Irreplaceability and portfolio assembly (to meet numeric and design goals)
 - Marxan is a spatially explicit decision support tool that optimizes selection of assessment units that attain goals (conservation targets) and at the least cost (suitability and area) – expert and partner input and review is critical to the use of this tool

Assessment products include data, maps and report. To view examples of some of these products for Oregon, visit nature.ly/OR_EAs and nature.org/resilienceNW.

V. Catherine Corbett of the Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership gave a presentation on Restoring the Lower Columbia River Ecosystem – Current Status and Future Challenges. She noted that protection and restoration actions have historically been focused on single species, faunal guilds, and restoring historic conditions, but there has been a shift to a multi-species approach moving forward, integrating climate change impacts. The ultimate goal in the lower Columbia is biological integrity – the science community has identified key ecosystem attributes that include natural habitat diversity, historical habitat mosaic, focal species, water quality, and ecosystem processes. To assess habitat change, scientists are comparing 1870s habitat coverage to 2010 - Historic habitat coverage is the proxy for natural habitat diversity; Significant losses and types of habitats are identified; the goal is to protect remaining intact habitats and recover lost habitats in areas where it is practical.

The standards used for creating credible conservation targets include using the best available science, following the scientific method, evaluating multiple alternatives, setting targets for short and long time periods, capturing some of everything, reducing the risk of losing representative components, resilience, evaluating errors and uncertainties, and anticipating change.

The methods used for setting measurable targets include establishing a regulatory threshold, referencing site conditions, identifying biodiversity hot spots, and using single species, multiple species and ecosystem approaches to setting resource targets.

Climate change impacts need to be considered. Sea level rise, changing precipitation patterns, changes in upwelling patterns, and warmer temperatures will affect outcomes. There needs to be a paradigm shift that incorporates climate change – we'll need to allow wetlands to migrate inland and identify ways to support species' ability to adapt. Focusing on restoring historic conditions will not be protective of native species in the long term.

VI. The group then discussed what success looks like:

- Shared conservation priorities.
- Step-down to agency actions.
- Parse out management and conservation issues at system scales.
- Ability to scale up or scale down. Data and priorities to address scale of question.
- Reaching agreement about current baseline condition for representative habitats and species – predictive capacity – consensus on starting point today.
- How do we develop the ability to do triage? Can we agree on what 30% of basin will dry out first, and stop investing in those places?
- Communities we work in see values in products – something for them.
- Ensure buy-in by entities that have the bulk of decisions/management (forest practices stakeholders, agencies, etc.).
- Landscape design approach – can it deal with the land-sea interface?
- Clear communications strategy with goals in mind for the region – development of a project plan – the goal is an investment plan for how we achieve goals.
- Collaboration by people working in the watershed.
- Common set of science and information needs that we can address relative to future stressors that would be useful to a large suite of partners.
- Collaborative process to leverage science producers and funders.
- Address some of the regulatory aspects – ESA (fish) and how NMFS addresses that on various projects.
- Need data steward working for all of us to synthesize information, id strengths, gaps, etc.
- Put energy into self-organizing using existing datasets – process.
- Grant opportunities don't have a way to bring different projects together and pave the way for landscape goals – bring funding sources under 1 umbrella – WA – “flood plains by design” – planning process can educate need for this.
- Clear understanding of who is going to use this information – how and when? ID the decisions we want to influence.
- Process needs to be funded with a strong convener throughout.
- Making best use possible of currently available information.
- Backbone organization to serve as clearinghouse – put info in and take info out.

VII. The group talked about the need for buy-in by those that live and work within the geographic scope of the LCD, noting the challenges and opportunities:

- People from outside the agency saying we want your agency to do this.
- Look beyond the managed areas and the conservation footprint to integrate private land and water use into the strategies that emerge from the planning process.
- Benefit from an outreach strategy to ensure there is transparency and we reach interested stakeholders, etc.
- Entities see this helping to achieve their mission.
- Funding – entities are limited by funding; having a mechanism to bridge gaps and bring people together to demonstrate funding will be available to get work done.
- We need to think about the implementation process; we're looking at the implementation strategies.
- Promote what we offer as an effort that will foster fact-based decision making; we could realign what we're currently doing to achieve shared objectives
- Salmon recovery – community (agencies, NGOs) - don't have their house in order – no standard vision or set of goals.

VIII. The group then discussed some of the key drivers within the draft geographic scope:

- Sea level rise (erosive processes, water changes, salt water wedge migration)
- Water availability
- Ocean Acidification and its effects on food web in estuaries
- Increasing human population
- Land use changes
- Habitat migration
- Changes in phenology
- Habitat connectivity
- Migratory bird habitat
- Salmon survival (aquatic fish species survival)
- Hydrology
- Habitat protection priorities
- Differentiate at the systems scale versus place-based
- Preventing invasive species spread
- Forest survival and health

IX. The draft geographic scope of the project was discussed. It was noted that of the pre-core team meeting survey respondents, 100% (12) recommended the core lower Columbia Area be included, 50% (6) recommended the northern coast of Oregon be included, 33% (4) recommended both the Chehalis River area and Grays Harbor be included, and 8% (1) recommended the entire Oregon coast be included. Comments made at the meeting:

- Extend geographic scope into nearshore.
- ESA – ESU basis – extend into White Salmon R in WA and Hood River in OR.
- Different scales – coarser and finer scales – can we take finescale plans and bring them “up” into this, or do we need to concentrate on course layer first?
- As we start discussing and sharing info, we’ll find different plans have common strategies and objectives.
- Should we bring in Chehalis Basin? Different partners, flood control.
- Many stressors – not just climate change (contaminants, transportation, etc.).
- Assess larger area first (vulnerability assessment).
- Get input on broader scale.

X. The group discussed key conservation interests, valued resources, and priorities within the draft geographic scope:

- Sharing interests and clarifying the need
- Conservation interests, valued resources, and priorities
- ESA salmon – ESUs
- Shellfish industry (interface with economic sectors)
- Willapa/Grays stakeholders – want to understand how their communities are going to change as a results of CC – how systems are likely to change at the system level – seek collaboration on management issues
- Pacific Birds – coastal wetlands – AK, BC to N California
- Shifts in habitat types
- Suite of fish, wildlife and plant priorities (tribal and nontribal)
- Processes – migration corridors, adaptive capacity, resilience
- Recognizing levee districts, irrigation districts, etc. – where are there co-benefits?
- Capital improvements

- Need measurable outcomes for priority species
- Transportation – infrastructure improvements and how we can work with highways
- Outdoor recreation
- Multiple benefits for all people (farmers, irrigators, recreationists, etc.) – we need to move on from framing our discussion about “this is what we set aside for fish and wildlife”
- Should we focus on what we think climate will do in terms of future? opportunities? Static landscape planning is not getting at it – it’s different and positive.
- Natural resource-dependent communities and businesses – include them at outset.
- Show the collaboration we are doing for multiple benefits.
- Look at streamflows we wish to maintain while looking at increasing demands for water.

XI. Vision statements from the pre-workshop survey were presented to identify elements of a core vision for the LCD initiative. Workshop attendees added to the list.

- Collaboration from conservation partners
- Apply sound, scientific principles
- Sustain long-term ecological health and integrity of LCR floodplain habitats
- Expand environmental education
- Encourage participation in wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities
- Protect and interpret unique cultural resources and foster cultural stewardship
- No net loss of habitat for key species (ESA)
- Stewardship of natural resources to sustain healthy natural functioning ecosystems
- Creation of a team of dedicated entities that work together to identify key issues and obtain funds to design and implement projects
- Establishment of reserve areas for wildlife
- Public lands contribution to a full suite of resource values
- Large-scale restoration projects that address multiple issues
- Creation of a network of sites that provide for native fish and wildlife conservation through sound ecosystem health
- Working landscapes
- Leveraging environmental outcomes
- Climate-resilient landscape – protection plan, incorporate SLR and effects; vegetation and species shifts; OA and impacts on food web and industry – specific actions to mitigate those;
- Understand how climate-driven impacts we can’t do much about will hit this system so that we understand what dials we can turn – climate impacts juxtapose with local human actions (e.g., OA – what dials can we turn down to mitigate?)
- Look at different priorities in different areas (work with issues in given area)
- Clear vision for the conservation priorities for the region – a depiction – based on current conditions, scenario analysis, future conditions, and steps to get there – climate-resilience
- Relevant to decision makers
- Be written in a way so implementers know how to use it
- Consider not using “resilient”
- What is restoration “success?” Restoring to historic conditions? We need a common definition of success in a restoration project

During this discussion, it was noted that a needs or problem statement was important to the initiative. The problem statement the Initial Team developed was shared:

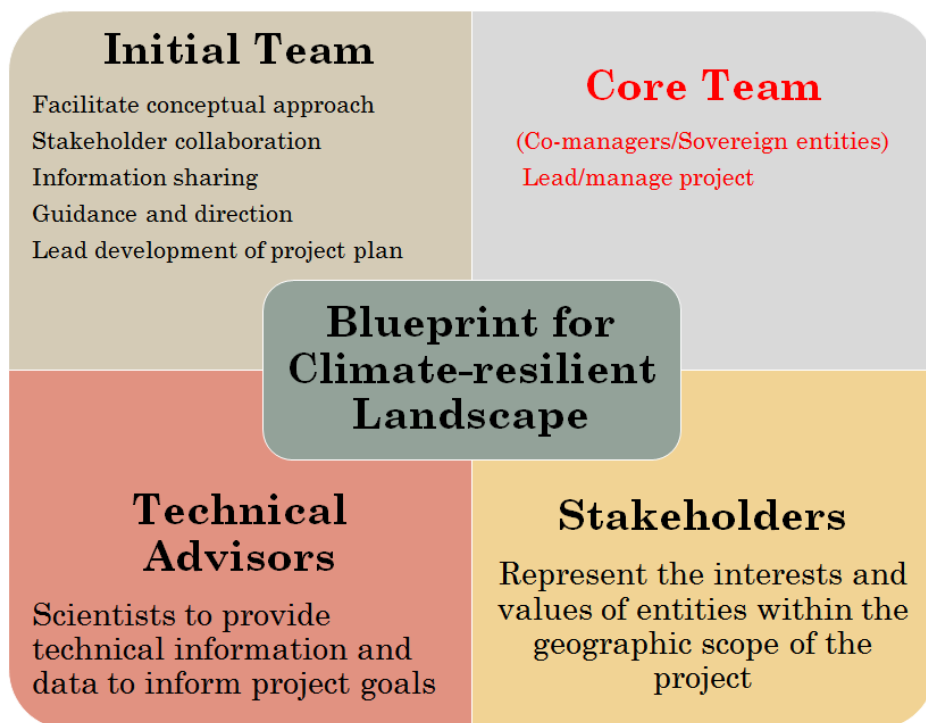
Need - Achieve conservation goals for key focal species and habitats

Issue - No unified landscape-scale conservation blueprints for the region that identify valued resources and consider the impacts of large-scale stressors on those resources

Opportunities:

- Identify valued resources (biological, cultural, societal)
- Assess the impacts of stressors (i.e., climate change, development)
- Create a conservation blueprint to guide management actions to achieve common conservation outcomes.

XII. The roles of the different teams were discussed, emphasizing that the Core Team are expected to be the project leads and managers. It was noted that the first phase of planning should be completed in advance of advocating for federal FY17 dollars, thus the goal is to complete the project plan in April 2016. The plan should reflect all views and focus on particular issues. It is estimated that the workload for core team members would be 2.5 to 3 days total to complete the project plan.



XIII. Next steps in the process:

- Draft an outline for the plan (L. DeBruyckere)
- Draft vision and goals (L. DeBruyckere)
- Identify core team members
- Core Team will meet in person in late February (L. DeBruyckere to send Doodle0)
- Next steps and expectations – Briefing packet will be developed (L. DeBruyckere)
- Identify conservation plans and priorities (Core Team – instructions needed). Note: To jump-start this process, Pacific Birds JV is hiring staff who will compile current conservation priorities and plans from partners within the region LCD region (and beyond). Instructions will be provided soon regarding who to contact and how to provide this information.
- Identify underrepresented plans/entities (All)

Other comments:

- Prospect for getting at what is not represented in existing plans – what’s operating at the system level; how are we going to react?
- Challenge is fragmentation – consider landscape-scale stressors – define the empty space for us to play in – no single lead entity exists or resources do not exist – make clear this will be DIFFERENT as part of the vision and goals – our existing priorities are camped out around the sum of the parts.
- Three stressors – freshwater flows, SLR and OA (suggested).
- Topical scope – what plans do we want to document and scale up?
- Be very clear in homework assignment outcomes to core team
- What are the science gaps? What don’t we know?
- Future session – overview of process – data – and steps to be taken
- Identifying environmental parameters (measures) that can be tracked over time. Could this group identify them?
- Include reference sites inside NPS (complete control)
- The group should consider the top three system-scale stressors we would like to deal with and assess whether or not the LCD can address those:
 - i. Great Northern LCC selected one stressor and one priority
 - ii. Scenario planning – landscape-scale impact of Sea Level Rise and freshwater flows
 - iii. We need to compile the conservation goals of the core team.

XIV. The group will have two in-person core team meetings between now and the completion of the project plan in April.

XV. Meghan Kearney (NPLCC) presented the website for the initiative (<https://sites.google.com/site/lowercolumbiariverlcd/>), noting they are working on a friendlier URL. The site contains background information on the initiative as well as other information associated with the project, partners, timetable, files, useful links and a discussion forum.