A landscape conservation design for the Lower Columbia River and coastal Washington/Oregon

February 29, 2016: 10am – 3pm, 911 NE 11th Avenue, Portland, Oregon, 3rd Floor Conference Room

LCD Core Team Meeting Minutes

Attendees: John Mankowski (NPLCC), Mary Mahaffy (NPLCC), Alex McManus (PC Trask), Sam Lohr (USFWS), Ethan Rosenthal, Levi Old (Great Basin LCC), Chris Maguire (ODOT), Garrett Phillips, Melissa Watkinson (TNC), Catherine Corbett (LCREP), Diane Barton (CRITFC), Khem So (USFWS), Amy Horstman (USFWS), Chris Swenson (USFWS), Dave Howe (Washington DFW), Tom Iverson (Yakama Nation), Steve Waste (USGS), Steve Bollens (Washington State University), Ann Edwards (citizen), Jane Hartline (Sauvie Island Habitat Partnership), Stephen Zylstra (USFWS), Megan Kearney (USFWS), Lisa DeBruyckere (facilitator)

Webinar attendees: John Bragg (PMEP), Rudy Salakory (Cowlitz Indian Tribe), Brad Bales (Pacific Birds), Lauren Leuck (USACE), Cynthia Wilkerson (WDFW), Cidney Bowman (ODOT), Jackie Ferrier (USFWS), Mark Petrie (Ducks Unlimited), Susan Haupt (ODOT)

Meeting goals:

- Develop a shared understanding of how stakeholders would use the outcomes from the LCD – what attributes are most important, scale, timeframe, resolution. What sort of decisions would the LCD likely inform now, and in the future?
- Develop a recommendation on the geographic scope of the initiative.
- Make recommendations on any further refinements on the vision and goal statements for the LCD.
- Affirm the elements of the current project plan draft and begin adding details—scoping language that describes how assessment work would be pursued; main analytical data and information needs; coarse substance of the implementation; key pieces of the project plan – any missing elements?
- Walk core team members through the new LCD website.

A. Stakeholders discussed how they envisioned using the outputs from the landscape conservation design:

- Site-scale evaluation – use high resolution data – would use the guiding principles and the data portal.
- Goal is to maintain aquatic systems in the estuarine and nearshore environments; LCD feeds directly into the overall strategy and prioritization efforts that will help PMEP guide project restoration.
- Management has adopted conservation priorities – one of them is coastal PNW looking at climate change impacts along the coast – in collaboration with LCD, we can look at different priorities and changing landscapes rel. to sea level rise. PB has a larger geographic scope.
- Tools that allow you to take a comprehensive approach to managing trust resources; provide context for past, current and future conditions. Land planning.
- Conservation planning – work with ODOT and other depts. Of transportation/small communities; An outcome is a common understanding of climate change that is area-specific, SLR, effects on landscape, a common understanding of response options; understanding of opportunities, especially those favorable to long-term conservation. Ability to use mitigation dollars for meaningful conservation efforts. Instead of doing postage stamp mitigation, put resources toward larger landscape-scale efforts.
- Making it a living product that keeps getting adapted – that people come back to it.

- Transportation projects have mitigation elements. We have been trying to do larger scale mitigation – we also want to achieve the greatest bang for the buck – where we achieve the greatest conservation values. Oregon has fish passage rules, but there are no wildlife passage rules. We want to be mindful toward wildlife. We need a strong case for where we would install a passage structure. ODOT only owns the right of way – not the land on either side. If we had a statewide or region-wide idea for where the best place would be to site the structure.
- How agencies incorporate it into their mitigation and other programs. We help local entities do mitigation projects. Having this info could help us target resources more effectively. We help local governments with restoration and land use planning.
- Prioritizing system-scale restoration along the coast. We want to i.d. some restoration projects and the issues. TNC would facilitate agencies to work on restoration projects. At the RCO, we fund hardscape development to restoration and recovery. Mitigation and restoration priorities. We are looking for some easy to use tools related to climate change, and how they might be used at a local level for non-scientists. We want our sponsors to consider climate change, whether you are doing a boat launch or a shoreline restoration project. We do our own share of planning. We have to do a plan every 5 years for the park service for our Land and Conservation Funds. Anything that comes out of this effort that speaks to wetland and open land conservation would be helpful.
- Board has approved voluntary habitat coverage targets for the Lower Columbia (national estuary program). These should be integrated into land use plans. These are not species-specific targets, and they don't incorporate climate change. Develop conservation targets for species that we can incorporate; incorporate SLR and freshwater flows – useful to use to incorporate.
- Use of this as a tool; most of our projects are mainstem and tributaries; producing ways to evaluate restoration projects. Look at the impact of urban stressors (climate change, topics). Infrastructure, population stressors – are there urban designs that can deal with the thermal and toxic stressors of increasing human population? Chemical components – increased use of herbicides and pesticides – this stress doesn't exist to this degree upstream.
- Incorporating climate change – having a common understanding of the impacts of climate change. Understanding ecosystem effects – what the LCD uses to inform other activities. Use lessons learned and information that comes out of the LCD to implement the best projects given what we now know. Engage the district staff in the future.
- Guidance and policy for refuge planning – understanding high priority areas. Think about ways that LCD can step down to refuge management – what an individual refuge contributes to a larger landscape.
- Restoration program – The bar for engagement for restoration projects. The ability to bring forward information and data that shows why actions are important – local government and private landowners. The communication and outreach planning part of this is important. Risk and infrastructure protection are key considerations – find ways to start the discussion – reduce flooding and preserve infrastructure while achieving conservation gains.
- Coastal Program will be doing 5-year strategic plan – we're a small program – we can bring things to the table, but we can't pull off large-scale restoration projects on our own – leverage larger projects.

- Prioritize conservation and recovery strategies for species and habitats. Prioritize land acquisition efforts – help focus more research and science development in areas we identify as gaps. Help inform education and outreach to certain communities. It would inform restoration and mitigation strategies. We provide assistance to other agencies – providing another tool for them when they make conservation decisions. Looking for product and process – working landscapes – looking for the LCD approach to help with the context – understanding the vision of where we want to get to – identify the partners. Understand which pieces of WDFW's mission we will be implementing on the group – where partners will be implementing their pieces.
- Shifting from reactive to proactive – starting to think longer term (50-year vision) – get back to their cultural priorities. There's the principle side – getting the tribes cultural and natural resource priorities out to the other planning efforts. And the data management and sharing side – common reporting – tribes see value in the data acquisition and management side – data portals will be valuable for them to be able to evaluate success and projects. Assess systems (temperature, sediment flow – fixing the ecological functions) – the information necessary to support the analysis did not exist at one time. This effort has that capacity. We can begin looking at ecological function and processes.
- Interested in seeing LCCs and CSC's succeed because they are at the landscape scale. We have done work in the basin at project scale. We have 9 USGS science centers in the region. Contaminant/habitat project conducted – what we can offer – work at a fundamental level with basic science – we can help glue together the postage stamp efforts. Provide data and science and facilitation to help.
- Landscape scale and unprecedented rate of change with climate. To link climate change with the systems – must look at the landscape scale – to raise general awareness of function – then we can deal with postage stamp projects.
- WSU could contribute to this LCD effort. WSU has active research projects in Lower Columbia River and Columbia River Basin. Long-standing partnership with Steve Waste and Tim Counihan. Active research relative to harmful algal blooms. Washington Sea Grant project to conduct ecological studies on nutrients, invasive species, algae from Camas downstream to mouth of river. Collaborating with faculty in school of education to assess how high school students can incorporate studies into their science, sense of stewardship and sense of place (5 high schools). NSF is funding 10 undergraduate research students exploring terrestrial and aquatic ecology across landscape scale in CRB.
- We manage people's impacts on wildlife. Issues addressing ecological health is a key driver – increasing human population – looking at this at a larger scale (connectivity, hit it fits together). Leveraging data, leveraging resources.
- Align with landowners and facilitate conservation efforts by understanding where we can establish meaningful partnerships.

Summary:

- Common need for how climate change is affecting the region.
- How to get our smaller scale conservation goals into a decision making pathway. This process can help map and get your conservation objective into the mainstream.
- A blueprint to target more meaningful mitigation.
- Blueprint to better assess projects and help focus restoration projects.

- How our conservation actions fit into the larger conservation goals for the landscape.
- Transacting data/spatial data/science/adaptation frameworks/monitoring – one place to exchange data and information.
- Partnership help leverage resources, focus additional research, increase outreach and education to people in the region.

It was noted that the LCD Initial Team is looking for any additional information to help inform the scale and timeliness needs as well as key decisions of entities participating in the effort.

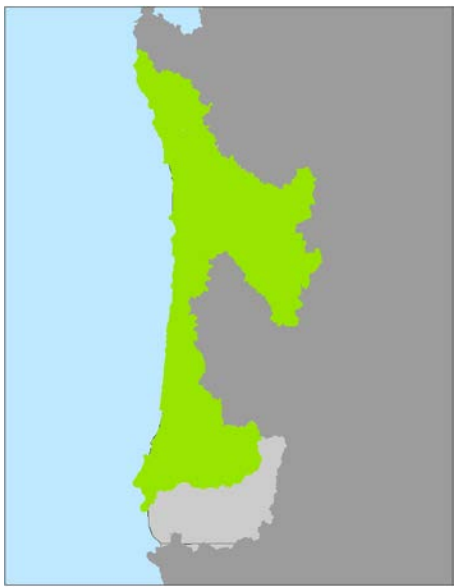
B. The draft vision and goal statements were reviewed:

- **Vision:** Achieve a network of healthy, connected, ecosystems and working landscapes capable of providing a full suite of ecosystem services that can absorb, respond, and adapt to climatic changes and other key stressors through the use of collaborative, science-based strategies.
  - To foster a spirit of collaboration, communication, and continual learning among the communities and diverse interests within the study area.
  - To create science-based, spatially explicit products that designate priority areas and the conservation actions necessary to achieve specified conservation goals and targets.
  - To understand how climate change and other stressors will affect the region.
  - To identify a diverse suite of intact, connected, functioning ecosystems and working landscapes capable of adapting to stressors and providing important ecological functions and services.
  - To sustain healthy, functional ecosystems that provide habitats for native fish, wildlife, and plant species and a suite of ecosystem services that benefit people.

It was suggested that the language in the 4th and fifth bullets be reviewed to ensure that they maintain the focus on identification (bullet four) and then implementation (bullet five), but use language so that the two don't sound so similar.

C. The geographic scope of the project, including proposed alternatives, was discussed. Criteria for identifying the scope was first discussed:

- Consistent/coherent ecoregion - Similarities in estuarine, terrestrial, and riverine ecosystems.
- Shares common change agents (threats & stressors) - Initial scope of issues: sea level rise, hydrologic regime shifts
- Socio-ecological system is relatively coherent
- The footprint is biologically relevant for species of concern
- Adequate for understanding terrestrial and aquatic connectivity
- Whole watersheds
- Exclude areas currently within an "LCD-esque" process
- Convergence with existing planning boundaries
- "Actionable" geography balanced with landscape-scale perspective
- The area includes the terrestrial-marine interface
- Geography is large enough to compete for LCD funding



Then the group discussed specifics to help guide delineation:

- Whole watersheds, but not the entire Columbia River system

- Downstream of Bonneville Dam
- Coastal riverine estuaries as a unifying concept - Including their watersheds and land-sea interface.
- North Pacific "hypermaritime" & maritime terrestrial ecological systems as another unifying concept.
- Exclusion of Willamette Valley
- Lower Columbia is a focal sub-geography

Participants reviewed locations of Bonneville Dam, West Coast estuaries (denoted by PMEP), North Pacific Ecological Systems, places projected to be most affected by sea level rise, land ownerships in western Oregon and Washington, areas where other landscape conservation designs were occurring in the region (e.g., Willamette Valley, Puget Sound), and PMEP's geographic focus in estuaries and the nearshore. There was discussion about how far up and down the coast the effort should include. It was suggested we should consider as far south as Cape Mendocino – John Mankowski and Mary Mahaffy will connect with the California LCC to determine if any LCD's will be occurring in northern California. It was noted that including a portion of California in the LCD would introduce a significant number of new partners and issues. There was no objection to the geographic scope of the map shown above, noting additional conversations with the California LLC would occur.

D. The Core Team then divided into two breakout sessions to address elements of the draft project plan, missing components, and needed elements and language. They made the following suggestions for sections of the plan:

1. Background
    a. Include population growth – I-5 corridor
    b. What is the time frame of the plan – to 2050? Look at when climate impacts will peak – see what other LCCs doing rel. to time frame – emergence of stressors
    c. Not just what the stressors are, but the results (loss of habitat and connectivity)
    d. Juxtaposition of energy interests with environment

2. Statement of Need
    a. Uniting planning efforts – LCC is in good place to do this – look at/do a good job with adaptation
    b. Access to information is key; ease in use of tools
    c. Evaluation of human infrastructure – humanscape is part of the landscape – do conservation work that aligns with human needs
    d. Ecosystem services
    e. Dual look at systems – e.g., what will happen if we move a road?
    f. **Ours is a special LCD because we have a major metropolitan area in the middle**

3. Vision and Goals
    a. **Vision:** Achieve a network of healthy, connected, ecosystems and working landscapes capable of providing a full suite of ecosystem services that can absorb, respond, and adapt to climatic changes and other key stressors through the use of collaborative, science-based strategies.
    b. To foster a spirit of collaboration, communication, and continual learning among the communities and diverse interests within the study area.
    c. To create science-based, spatially explicit products that designate priority areas and the conservation actions necessary to achieve specified conservation goals and targets.
    d. To understand how climate change and other stressors will affect the region.
    e. To identify a diverse suite of intact, connected, functioning ecosystems and working landscapes capable of adapting to stressors and providing important ecological functions and services.

f. To sustain healthy, functional ecosystems that provide habitats for native fish, wildlife, and plant species and a suite of ecosystem services that benefit people.

4. Project Participants
    a. Expand to include local county, conservation districts, local governments, Washington Marine Resource Committees, Grande Ronde, Shoalwater Bay, Siletz, Hoh. Quileute, NWIFC, Makah, FEMA, WA DNR, OR INR, DLCD, OR DEQ, OHSU, OSU
    b. Too many federal agencies – not enough smaller groups and counties – INVITE
    c. May be important to engage locals later – if you bring them in too soon, you may lose them
    d. Manage expectations in relation to scale
    e. Watch out for meeting fatigue
    f. What other regional plans are underway? How do we bring them along or grab their coattails?
    g. Who else is actively working on the same issues?

5. Guiding Principles
    a. How will balancing winners-losers come to fruition? Possible to distribute through subregions – this effort will support conservation priorities throughout the region – the needs of partnerships.
    b. System-level approach
    c. Respect treaty and tribal trust responsibilities – include perspectives of western science and TEK (where they choose to contribute)
    d. Think about inner team communication
    e. Be open and transparent with data and information
    f. Support consensus – decision making
    g. Look at interface between different types of ecosystems
    h. Recognize strengths, honor restraints, collaboration – be inclusive of different perspectives
    i. Move through fairly quickly – then drill down – show success early
    j. Continue to refine
    k. Allow partners to identify opportunities to conduct actions that achieve multiple benefits across multiple scales.

6. Project Approach
    a. Identify a management structure to be the backbone organization that hold it together – could be LCC or otherwise
    b. Fifth bullet – identify programs and initiatives/practices and other actions
    c. Add – establish baseline reference points (historic conditions versus present)
    d. Integrate stressors and figure out what you want - move to desired future conditions
    e. Evidence-based controls and treatments – measure effects. Introduced evidence-based adaptive management at landscape scale.
    f. Narrowing range of conflict
    g. Compare areas where you are not doing anything.
    h. Diversity of approaches at landscape scale is a bonus – we can learn from different approaches
    i. Identify who is going to implement the LCD & who are the people we need to convince – set it up so people can self-identify
    j. Build in incentives
    k. Focus on a few early and easy accomplishments

7. Technical Approach

a. Add language about ecosystem services
b. **Designate a technical team to describe how the LCD might be implemented**
c. GC. Add spatial and temporal scales
d. Figure out what the questions are
e. Look at other ecosystems, e.g., grasslands
f. Identify data gaps
g. Tie in with ODFW's conservation strategy WDFW, ESA recovery plans

8. Decisions that can be informed (it was recommended that this section be moved to before Section D in the plan)
    a. How climate change is affecting the region.
    b. How to get our smaller scale conservation goals into a decision making pathway. This process can help map and get your conservation objective into the mainstream.
    c. A blueprint to target more meaningful mitigation.
    d. Blueprint to better assess projects and help focus restoration projects.
    e. How our conservation actions fit into the larger conservation goals for the landscape.
    f. Transacting data/spatial data/science/adaptation frameworks/monitoring – one place to exchange data and information.
    g. Partnership help leverage resources, focus additional research, increase outreach and education to people in the region.

9. Project outcomes and deliverables
    a. Assessment of current AND HISTORICAL natural resource conditions
    b. Keep an organization of collaborators that keeps the work going
    c. Have a demonstration project(s) effort – can be used to inform decision making – add to LCD website – explain multiple benefits of projects, incl. impacts to humans
    d. Local governments have tools they can use – how can they use information
    e. Contribute to a shared community of practice – LCDs share successes
    f. Implementation strategies and policies – get things down to the local level
    g. Include state agencies that have land management authorities – need people in humanscape (ODOT/DSL)
    h. Compliance requirements

E. Upcoming webinar – The Core Team approved the concept of conducting a short webinar to report the results of this meeting and the updated project plan to all interested entities.

F. Meghan Kearney (NPLCC) led a review of the new LCD website, which is www.columbiacoastblueprint.org.