

# National Landscape Conservation Cooperatives Network: Assessment Findings and Recommendations

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## Background

Over the last few years, the federal natural resource agencies have undertaken numerous landscape-scale conservation initiatives, including the USDA Forest Service's (USFS) Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) and its "all lands" approach to planning, and Department of the Interior's Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs), Climate Science Centers (CSCs), and the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) landscape approach/Rapid Ecoregional Assessments (REAs). The Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force under the direction of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) is also promoting coastal and marine spatial planning processes. In addition to these federal initiatives, a multitude of landscape conservation collaboratives are underway – at many different scales, and with many different missions and models – addressing a broad range of ecological issues. An underlying premise of landscape-scale conservation is that it cannot be accomplished or undertaken by any one agency or organization – the scale of the effort demands collaboration and partnerships at a nearly unprecedented scale. As a result, partnerships are being established at multiple levels, across multiple organizations – including within and outside the federal government. National leaders of tribes, states, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), industry, and academic institutions are participating in these many efforts.

With the signing of Secretarial Order No. 3289 on September 14, 2009, Department of the Interior (DOI) Secretary Ken Salazar launched one of these landscape-scale conservation efforts through the formation of Landscape Conservation Cooperatives. This order expanded a conservation program initiated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) into a department-wide effort to better integrate science and management in addressing the impacts from climate change and other landscape-scale disturbances. LCCs are applied conservation science and management partnerships between the DOI bureaus, other federal agencies, states, tribes, NGOs, universities and stakeholders within a geographically defined area.

In broad terms, the LCCs are intended to link and integrate DOI's proposed CSCs with resource managers and science users. The LCCs are intended to bring additional DOI resources to bear on landscape-scale issues and opportunities, and to help coordinate a wide range of efforts to respond to climate change, invasive species, wildfires, human development, and other change agents across the landscape.

A total of 22 regional LCCs, with boundaries established by DOI, are in various stages of formation across the country. Each regional LCC is intended to be a self-directed, stand-alone partnership. Individual LCC steering committees will evaluate regional needs and develop initial sets of proposed objectives and priorities as well as establish their own structure and direction.

The areas for DOI's LCCs intersect with many other landscape-scale conservation efforts already being undertaken. The LCCs are not intended to replace these existing organizations or programs already accomplishing conservation work in the LCC areas. The aim is to facilitate, enhance, and expand that work. Specific objectives and priorities will be determined by the partnerships themselves.

As part of this national DOI initiative, an LCC National Council is being proposed to provide support and guidance to the LCCs and to provide a mechanism to maintain consistency and coordination at both regional and national scales. In addition, an LCC National Network comprised of representatives from the LCC staff would serve the role of providing coordination at the LCC management level.

## Purpose of this Assessment

The U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) engaged the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (U.S. Institute) to assist with determining the interest of national partners in participating in a national council, and in developing a strategy to engage partners at the national level in establishing a national council. The U.S. Institute retained EnviroIssues to conduct an independent, third-party neutral assessment of national partners and DOI leadership to gauge potential support, concerns and suggestions for establishing an LCC National Council that could provide national perspective while maintaining the self-directed quality of the 22 LCCs.

### *Overarching assessment objectives:*

- To gauge pre-existing knowledge, challenges and level of support for an LCC National Council.
- To identify an effective approach for leadership and direction of an LCC National Council and coordination with the Climate Science Centers.
- To identify common understandings and potential goals for an LCC National Council.
- To inform a proposed framework that meets the needs of all in order to work together efficiently.

### *Objectives specific to the DOI leadership assessment:*

- To identify the critical elements for a solid internal structure.
- To identify existing oversight and direction in the DOI.

### *Objectives specific to the national partner assessment:*

- To identify level of interest of partners to engage in the LCCs and identify who might want to be involved in an LCC National Council.

## Methods

EnviroIssues developed an assessment plan that included interview objectives and questions and a proposed list of interviewees. The U.S. Institute and EnviroIssues accepted feedback on the assessment plan from a core group of LCC staff, including the LCC National Coordinator and other key people/positions.

Nineteen potential DOI leaders were identified, with a total of 16 interviews completed by the end of the assessment. Forty-five potential national partner interviewees were identified, and a total of 33 interviews were conducted. The full set of interview questions can be found in Appendix A. Prior to scheduling interviews, a memo from Deputy Secretary David Hayes was sent to the identified DOI leaders describing the purpose of the assessment. Once an interview was scheduled, interviewees received the LCC fact sheet, a brief overview of the effort, and the interview questions.

EnviroIssues and U.S. Institute staff conducted phone interviews in September, October and November of 2011 to provide the basis for this assessment. Interviews were conducted by Penny Mabie of

Envirolssues and Marsha Bracke of Bracke & Associates. Maggie McCaffrey, U.S. Institute, also participated in a number of the interviews. Each interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. A synthesis and analysis of the interview findings are provided in the following sections.

## Assessment Findings

### ***How knowledgeable were the respondents about LCCs and how supportive were they of the LCCs in general and specifically of a National Council?***

In more than 15 interviews with leaders and senior managers within DOI, respondents were aware of the LCCs and the notion of an LCC National Council. Support for a national council was broad among DOI leadership, although the suggested level of responsibility and authority of a national body over the LCC network was not evenly shared. Similarly, most of the non-DOI leadership of national and state organizations interviewed had a good grasp of the existence of LCCs, though many expressed uncertainty about their value and relevance. Several national partner interviewees had no knowledge of the possibility of a national council, and expressed some concerns about the premise, which will be addressed later in the findings.

Key points:

- DOI leaders associated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) were most knowledgeable about LCCs. Other respondents inside the DOI strongly associated the LCC effort with the FWS, although they recognized that the Secretary of the Interior has attempted to broaden the effort by charging other bureaus with LCC responsibilities. Many national partners assumed the LCC effort was a FWS-led initiative. Several said it would be very challenging to develop broad support for goals and priorities identified by the LCC National Council unless membership was inclusive and representative of all partners – inside and outside of the federal government.
- Most national partners were participating in or had heard of the LCCs, and indicated support for them. They were, however, often vague about the relevance of the LCCs. Many seemed unclear on the leadership of and mission for the LCCs, or what was expected in terms of outcomes. And, they were concerned with the sustainability of the LCCs without significant demonstration of value.

A clear picture emerged that many national partners and some DOI leaders are very focused on their own missions. While they may see potential value in the LCCs and recognize that landscape-scale conservation is essential, they are guarded in their willingness to commit scarce resources or prioritize LCCs unless and until the value and sustainability of the effort is proven. State representatives, in particular, mentioned that if faced with choosing where to direct limited resources, they would focus on the effort providing the greatest value.

In summary, there was broad support for creating a national council, with the hope that it could provide the needed definition and establish consistency, goals and expectations for the LCCs.

### ***What specific purpose, goals and roles were suggested for the National Council?***

In general, most DOI leaders and managers acknowledged the potential value of a national council to complete the LCC network. Similarly, most national partners also supported a national council, although

not all for the same purposes as those within DOI. Key shared themes regarding the potential purpose and goals of a national council included:

- Focus on coordination and communication between the individual LCCs to support a cohesive purpose and core message.
- Articulate shared outcomes of the LCCs and support collaboration across geographies.
- Operate in a bottom-up and top-down model, with two-way communication flow.
- Advocate for the LCCs and share their success stories within federal agencies and Congress.

Key points:

- The most striking commonality was the expression by almost every respondent that a national council should not micro-manage or attempt to dictate to the LCCs. Many observed the tension created by developing, from the ground up, a set of self-directed partnerships, and then attempting to meld them together as a network. An additional challenge noted was adding what some perceived as an additional layer of a national body over the top, and establishing it without undermining the self-directed nature of the individual LCCs.
- This core tension between a desire for a national council that could provide consistency and direction for the LCCs, while not being too directive was reflected in interviewees' responses about setting priorities and conservation goals. There was no clear consensus; either within DOI or the national partners, on whether setting LCC priorities was a key role for the national council. Some partners suggested the national council should influence the direction and priorities of the LCCs in terms of science and the scientific agenda.

Opinions also diverged between segments of the national partners regarding whether the national council should develop national conservation goals and/or priorities. Many of the NGOs expressed a keen desire for national-level conservation goals or priorities to provide commonality and a national voice for conservation. Some respondents articulated a need for the council to work from the ground up, beginning with individual LCCs and seeking commonalities to inform national priorities. Others suggested that top-down priorities could help achieve some of the needed consistency between LCCs.

Many potential state partners expressed, either directly or indirectly, a concern that a national council could end up attempting to set not only national priorities, but dictating priorities or management decisions to the states. Individuals expressed views along a continuum that ranged from seeing the threat as a distant possibility to seeing it as a clear and present danger.

In sum, this core tension and lack of consensus will pose a significant challenge to the development of a national council. Having a national council to provide greater definition and consistency in national goals or priorities could provide greater clarity and potentially help partners better understand how and where to participate in the LCCs and would likely help them determine if they should participate. On the other hand, if the council attempts to dictate goals and priorities, it poses a threat to the individual LCCs and many of the partners.

There is agreement that involving tribes, states, and NGOs in the development of the national council is important. However, negotiating this fine line on setting national goals and priorities will require significant collaboration and trust-building with national partners. To walk this fine line, partners will have to determine how an integrated, interdependent network can emerge from this foundation. To be a successful network, it must be more than a confederation of

individual LCCs. Council members will have to determine what type of guidance, oversight, advice, and framework will be accepted and supported by the individual LCC partners. Those will be significant issues faced in determining the governance, mission and membership of a national council and will drive its success (or failure).

***What issues should a National Council address? Not address?***

In general, interviewees agreed that the national council should concern itself with more policy-level issues. However, there was disagreement on what specific issues a national council should or should not address – which appears to be related to the lack of a clearly articulated mission for the LCCs, and the need to support an LCC network without undermining the local, bottom-up development of each LCC’s organization and priorities.

Key points:

- Climate change emerged as one of the issues, with a range of views within DOI and among national partners. Several DOI respondents and national partners noted that climate change was an original driver for establishment of the LCCs as well as for landscape-scale conservation. They said that keeping climate change a primary focus of the LCCs was an imperative issue for the national council to address. Others noted that while climate change was a landscape-scale stressor, there were many other stressors that should be of equal importance. And some noted that given the political associations often attached to climate change; it might be best if it was not directly addressed. Others suggested that individual LCCs should have the latitude to determine the degree of emphasis on climate change. This discussion has occurred in several LCCs, and it will be an issue of significant challenge for a national council.
- Funding for LCCs was also a commonly mentioned issue. DOI leaders suggested development of sustainable funding was an important issue for a national council to address. Some national partners suggested a national council could coordinate funding, identify a national funding source, and advise each LCC on how this money should be spent. However, once again, the tension between a national council and the self-directed nature of LCCs arose regarding funding. Several national partners, including NGOs and states, expressed concern that a national council providing any kind of guidance or structure for how funds should be allocated to the LCCs would potentially result in pitting LCCs against each other and/or competing for funding from the council. Others believed that addressing issues such as coordination of funding would support the consistency they desired across the LCC network. Some concern was expressed that staffing or budgetary support for the national council should not be taken from existing LCC resources.
- LCC regional boundaries, particularly pertinent to those states that have multiple LCCs, emerged as an issue from DOI leaders and from national partners. Most states with multiple LCCs identified boundary issues as a significant challenge that should be addressed at the national level. Yet not all states believed it was a national issue; they thought the LCCs should be able to negotiate among themselves to make adjustments to boundaries, since the boundaries had local implications. Most DOI leaders thought that boundaries were clearly an issue to be addressed at the national level.

Similarly, when queried specifically about issues the national council should NOT address, the answers were reflective of the strong desire to retain the independent and self-directed nature of the individual LCCs. Interviewees said a national council should not be concerned with micro-managing operational issues or get drawn into regional controversy. Yet some suggested the national council could have a

conflict resolution role for the LCC network. Several stated that LCCs should not pick or use a specific management approach from any one agency.

One DOI leader noted that addressing climate change, determining national conservation goals and priorities, and coordinating funding was beyond the purview of a national council for the LCCs. It required coordination at the highest levels of leadership across the multiple landscape-scale initiatives. Nevertheless, this individual saw a role for the LCC national council in providing top-level leadership with input and advice on policy issues.

### ***How might a national council be structured? Who should participate in it?***

Key points:

- **Size:** When discussing structure of a national council, size was a consistent issue. The “not too big but totally representative” challenge was expressed by many, but few had substantive suggestions to solve the challenge. One proposed suggestion to bridge the challenge was to divide the network of LCCs into four distinct regions and have representatives from each region selected by the region’s LCCs and assigned to the national council to represent that region’s needs and interests. However, a few national partners, primarily states or state associations, suggested that all LCCs should have a representative on the national council, even while admitting it would make the council unwieldy.
- **Representation:** By and large, all respondents recommended representation should include tribes, states, national-level NGOs, LCCs, and industry. There were diverging opinions as to whether academics, scientists, and local level organizations that do not have national representation should be included. Balancing the size versus representation issue will be a significant challenge in order to achieve buy-in and avoid establishing a council of such a size that it can accomplish little more than ongoing discussion.

Although all those interviewed felt the council should not be directive, some DOI respondents suggested federal representation should be at the assistant director level to demonstrate commitment and bring decision-authority to the council. An interesting suggestion from a few respondents was that representatives should be highly-placed but more importantly, should be champions for landscape-scale conservation who bring needed vision and clarity to the effort. An important DOI observation was if bureau heads are members, but they begin to send lower-level surrogates instead of themselves, they have lost faith in the council being productive and/or effective.

- **Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA):** FACA questions emerged fairly frequently, mostly from NGOs and federal respondents. Some believed that establishing the body under FACA was clearly required; others worried that it could add complexity and rigidity to the process. Most who raised the concern recognized that until the mission and composition of the council was established, the FACA question could not be resolved. This issue will need to be carefully considered as the national council structure is determined.

Establishing the national council under FACA could institutionalize the notion that the council is a federal agency construct, designed to advise the federal government on LCC issues, not a national-level partnership. This could very likely increase the tension and the defensiveness of individual LCCs striving to maintain their self-directed identity. If chartered under FACA, the mechanisms for bringing issues to the national council and communicating national council

recommendations through the federal agency to LCCs would need to be very carefully developed in conjunction with all the LCCs and the national council.

- **Advisory or Brain Trust:** Some DOI leaders and national partners pondered whether a council should be structured to be an advisory body to DOI or to be more of a “brain trust” and a place to capture best practices, look broadly at the issues of landscape conservation, and provide a space for dialogue, sharing and learning, with no clear consensus emerging or expected. They expressed concern that there does not seem to be a collective definition of landscape-scale conservation. They noted there was a significant lack of awareness, coordination and collaboration among the many landscape-scale efforts currently underway, and suggested a national council could perhaps fill that significant void.
- **Meeting Frequency and Locations:** Suggestions about frequency and location of meetings were varied with only two clear themes emerging: 1) the structure should be as inclusive as possible and 2) all meeting locations and schedules should be coordinated and contiguous with other significant meetings so as to minimize travel expenses and maximize participation.
- **Coordination with Climate Science Centers (CSCs):** Although unaccompanied by suggested solutions, one key structural issue mentioned was the need for cross-coordination with the CSCs, and clarity and connection of the LCC national council and the CSC’s Federal Advisory Committee Act national committee, including mission, participants in common, and collaboration in meeting schedule and topics.
- **Resources and Staffing:** A consistent theme across all respondents was the need for significant and consistent support for a national council in terms of resources and staffing. Some suggested an executive director-type position was needed, while others thought the current FWS National LCC Coordinator could staff the council. Regardless of how the staffing support is provided, all who mentioned it, both within and outside DOI, said that the support could not be a “side job” or additional responsibility; it needed to be a dedicated position.

***Are there barriers that would inhibit the success of a national council?***

DOI leaders and national partners expressed concerns regarding the overall success of the LCC National Council, and the LCCs in general. Nearly all interviewees cited barriers, many of which were related to the council’s purpose and goals and a consistent call for clarity and focus. The barriers stated typically revealed the underlying concerns that had already emerged, including;

- Self-directed vs. top-down tension.
- Representative and inclusive partnership at the national level.
- Diverting funding from the local LCCs or from agency or organizational missions.

**Key points:**

- In addition to those concerns already noted, some DOI leaders were very concerned about the success of a national council and, more importantly, the entire LCC effort, if leaders at the highest level of federal government do not come together and establish a coordinated and collaborative approach to landscape-scale conservation and climate change. They expressed certainty that leadership needed to be able to

*“Right now we have 1,000 points of light on climate change. We need to tighten our focus.”*

prove that landscape-scale conservation is a better, more effective and efficient way to address broad-scale conservation challenges. While this barrier may be beyond the achievable scope of a national council, it may pose a fundamental roadblock to the success of a national council if not addressed.

- DOI leaders and national partner interviewees also stated a concern that the LCC initiative has resulted in redirection of resources from the field or from other important local, regional or landscape-scale initiatives. Given the current funding picture, and the reality that budget cuts are almost inevitable, this perception will likely persist, or even gain strength, if a national council moves forward. In the short term, this perception could undermine important partners' willingness to participate in the establishment of a national council, which may mean that key voices are not included. That, in turn, could jeopardize long-term success, if parties who chose not to come to the table early, withhold their support or seek to sabotage the reputation or work of a national council.
- A separate, but related concern was noted regarding how funding from DOI (or other agencies) comes to the LCCs, and what controls or expectations are placed on them. Funds that come with individual bureau expectations of the LCCs, can, in actuality or perception, undermine the locally-driven determination of LCC priorities, work plans and even partner participation. Funding agencies or bureaus must find a way to balance the need for funding accountability with the need for maximum flexibility in allocating resources to an LCC's self-identified priorities. This demonstrates another need for a national council to establish success metrics to which funding agencies can peg their expectations while allowing LCCs maximum flexibility.
- Many national partners voiced concern about the perception that a DOI bureau was "driving" the agenda(s) or priorities of the LCCs it "stood up." This perception is likely to persist unless careful attention is paid to the way bureaus engage with the LCCs they "support", including funding and/or providing staff.
- NGOs worried that the council will lack diversity, but also noted that their resources to participate are stretched extremely thin, and they would be reluctant to participate unless it appeared the national council would make significant impacts. States feared a command and control approach from the federal government, and want a clear articulation of what they stand to gain from their participation. However, they are also concerned about the consequences of not participating. Tribal representatives questioned the sincerity of desire for their full participation and expressed concerns about the ability to participate without funding support. DOI leaders expressed concern over a bureaucratic and cumbersome council that could be ineffective and expensive.

*"We need coordination at a national level that's not just the FWS, but other agencies."*

The repetition of these concerns – whether as council goals, roles, issues, barriers, or structural suggestions – continues to highlight the significant and challenging expectations that will be placed on a national council. In the eyes of this group of respondents, a national council must define the overarching LCC mission, clarify the value, identify the outcomes, demonstrate success, and make the LCCs worth the time and investment. It should help to prioritize efforts, but not get in the way of the regional needs and perspectives. It must provide clear direction from high-level leadership, but it must not be DOI or other federal agency-driven.

## Recommendations

*“If LCCs are going to endure – they have to be able to articulate what they have done to enhance conservation at multiple scales. In order to say that, they have to have some commonality in how to define success, what the outcomes are, and what we measure. We have trouble articulating successes and goals at a national level. It’s a collective failure of being able to talk about conservation at this scale. That’s a key role for the national level body.”*

As stated in the introduction to this assessment, conservation partnerships are being established at multiple levels, across multiple organizations – including within and outside the federal government. National leaders of tribes, states, non-governmental organizations and industry are being invited to participate in these many efforts. To bring the needed clarity of purpose for landscape-scale conservation, as well as define goals, priorities and measures of success needed for the LCCs, leadership at the highest levels in the federal agencies will need to coordinate with each other and their partners across these multiple initiatives. Coordination at this level is also critical for aligning priorities and funding across agencies and building public-private partnerships to support landscape-scale efforts.

In addressing the role of a national body for the LCCs, leaders within DOI are not always clear about what is and should be the federal government’s role in landscape conservation. National partners question how and when to participate; what will bring the most benefit, address the issues most effectively and ultimately result in improved conservation. All wonder about the connective tissue for landscape-scale conservation from policy to science to field activities.

A clear and unequivocal message from all those interviewed was that the national council should not be established as a body to give direction to the self-governing LCCs. What should the role of the national council be if they do not give direction? What value can the council bring to the LCCs and to landscape conservation? These are the questions our recommendations address.

### Key Recommendations Based on Findings

- National-level coordination, including definition of landscape-scale conservation, identification of clear outcomes and role of the LCC network, should be a key initial focus of the national council.
- The process for convening the council should be open, inclusive and adaptive.
- The national council structure should be broadly inclusive and representative of all potential interests and constituencies.
- Goals and roles of the national council should be nationally focused, champion landscape-level conservation, and provide clarity and focus to the LCC network while respecting and supporting self-governing and self-directed LCC partnerships.
- DOI should consider addressing internal barriers to the success of individual LCCs, a national council, and landscape-scale conservation in general.

## Detailed Recommendations

### *National level coordination*

- National coordination of landscape-scale conservation initiatives and of the LCCs emerged as a key challenge to be addressed and one that we recommend should be an early focus of the national council. Some ways the council might address national coordination would be to explore how LCCs fit into the national picture, to seek a common definition of landscape-scale conservation, or to consider how landscape-scale conservation is to be assessed and success measured on a consistent basis.
- The multitude of different landscape-level efforts in which federal agencies and other partners are seeking participation by tribes, states and national partners is another challenge the council should tackle. Additionally, the challenge of answering the frequently heard question – what value is being provided by the LCCs – should be taken on by the national council. Ways the council could address these challenges could include taking a role in identifying and delineating the different landscape-scale initiatives; seeking to add clarity to a catalog of different landscape-scale efforts; or by aiming to tie the LCC network’s goals and purpose to a more common, national understanding of the value of landscape-scale conservation.

### *Proposed structure of the national council*

- We recommend the national council include very broad representation of constituents across all levels of the public and private sectors in order to address the lack of trust and buy-in that surfaced during the assessment. Potential categories of representation could include:
  - Senior level federal agency leaders, both within and outside of DOI, who can commit resources, are visionary and can effect change.
  - Tribal and state governments – either through national organizations, such as the Native American Land Conservancy, or American Fish and Wildlife Association, or direct representatives from tribal or state governments.
  - NGOs with national organizations and representatives.
  - LCC Steering Committee chairs (at least six).
  - Representatives from academia, industry, and private landowners.
- The national council will face significant challenges with non-federal participation and development of national partner trust. Concerns of top-down or dictatorial federal involvement or infringement on states’ individual authorities may inhibit full participation. One way to address this would be to consider tribal, state or NGO involvement in council leadership.
- Another issue we recommend the national council deal with is the perception that DOI or one of its bureaus is the driver of the LCC effort. A potential strategy to reduce this perception could be for the council to be underwritten by as many of the partners as possible to demonstrate collaborative partnerships and investment.
- Clear and improved communications between agencies and LCCs and between LCCs was deemed essential to the success of the LCC network and the national council. We recommend the national council consider what means and methods it will use to support improved communications. A dedicated website, email address, contact person, webinars, distribution of interim updates, issue papers, etc. are only a few of the possibilities.

- Many interviewees noted the national council will need dedicated staff to ensure its work is clearly guided and scheduled, and accountability is preserved. We recommend this discussion occur early in the formation of a council.

*Proposed process for establishing the national council*

- Establishment of a national council that can address the critical tensions identified in this assessment will be a significant undertaking. We recommend DOI convene a strategy team whose membership represents the diverse array of partners who have demonstrated strong interest and willingness to tackle these challenges. We recommend this group address the following key issues:
  - Who should convene a national council?
  - How can a national council be fully representative without size being a significant stumbling block?
  - How can a national council provide guidance and consistency to a network of LCCs that are self-directed and self-governing?
  - Should a national council be chartered under FACA?
  - What should be the mission of a national council, as informed by the assessment findings?
  - What roles should a national council fill, as informed by the assessment findings – advocacy, national priority-setting, seeking funding, etc.?

Potential ways to address these key issues could include meeting in a workshop to develop recommendations for each of these issues; developing an overall recommendation by way of a straw man charter; or develop a suite of different alternatives for convening and chartering a national council.

- As a strategy group struggles with the oft-mentioned dilemma of a fully representative council that is not too large in size, one option could be to consider a phased approach to the council size and representation. It may be that seat rotation, organizational rotation, and other structural mechanisms could maximize representation with fewer representatives at some point in the national council’s development.
- Regardless of how a strategy group decides to proceed, we recommend it consider and decide if and how broadly it will seek input on its recommendations from potential partners. The group will have to wrestle with how much involvement is needed in the convening of the national council to set the stage for inclusivity and demonstrate a commitment to partnering, not directing. Means for seeking input span a wide continuum and include:
  - Broadly share the group’s recommendations as they are developed and seek and consider input.
  - Request input from a few key partners and then convene and charter a council based on that input.
  - Develop a fully-fleshed out charter package and advise national partners of the impending convening process.

*Goals and roles of the national council*

Goals that have the most support across the national partners and within DOI revolve around consistency of vision and mission and the need to provide clarity and vision without attempting to

drive the operation or governance of individual LCCs. The roles assumed by the council could help to strike a balance of allowing self-directed LCCs to determine their own path while remaining within the parameters developed in partnership at the national level. Such a role could enable the council to provide guidance on shared national priorities and an overarching vision that the LCCs cannot provide, as their primary focus must be on their regional collaborative efforts. These goals and roles could include:

Potential goals:

- Develop a crisp and focused vision and mission for the LCC network.
- Articulate shared outcomes of the LCCs and support collaboration across geographies.
- Develop a shared set of national priorities for landscape-scale conservation.
- Collaborate and coordinate seamlessly with the USGS Climate Science Centers network.

Potential roles:

- Serve as a champion for landscape-scale conservation and for the LCC network.
- Advocate for the LCCs and share their success stories within federal agencies and Congress.
- Seek sustainable funding for the LCC network.
- Provide guidance to the LCC network regarding national landscape-scale conservation initiatives, opportunities and challenges, regional (cross-LCC) collaboration opportunities, and developing or emerging issues of national or regional importance.

#### *DOI internal barriers*

We recommend the DOI consider addressing barriers that were mentioned by interviewees. These barriers were discussed in association with how the department's organizational structure supports landscape-scale coordination and collaboration. As identified by numerous interviewees, an opinion (real or perceived) that a particular bureau is the owner or driver of the LCC effort is counter-productive to successfully working in partnership across the department and with regional and national partners in addressing landscape-scale issues and supporting the LCC network. Restrictions on LCC funding due to a bureau's specific mission(s) may inhibit the collaborative and self-directed nature of an LCC. Different bureaus may have varying levels of understanding of the unique nature and value of cross-boundary collaboration.

#### ***Final Note***

The LCC Coordinators were informed about the National LCC Network Assessment and its purpose and objectives. They requested the opportunity to provide their feedback and input into the assessment. While not included in the assessment findings, their input includes many of the key themes and concerns heard from DOI and national level partners, particularly regarding the clarity of vision and mission, avoiding undermining the self-directed nature of the LCCs, and ensuring that governance and operational issues remain at the local LCC level.

Some of their suggestions are very specific and reflective of the intrinsic value of going to the field to seek input. For example:

- Use the term "continental" rather than "national" (e.g. national network, national council) so as to be inclusive of our Canadian and Mexican partners.

- Be open to adaptation. The council should be a reflection of the LCCs – a self-directed entity and driven by needs of partnership or connection at a larger level.
- Serve as a clearinghouse of best practices and approaches to novel issues. Just as LCC steering committees provide a regional forum for collaboration, the national [continental] council could do the same at the national [continental] level. Examples of organizations fulfilling such a role include the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and Trout Unlimited.

In general, the LCC coordinators supported establishment of a national council, with many of the same suggestions regarding goals and roles as was gleaned from the formal assessment. We recommend the inclusion of their input and recommendations in subsequent steps of the convening process.

## Appendix A. Interview Questions

### Interview purpose

1. The main goals of this assessment are:
  - a) To gather input for the development of an LCC National Council.
  - b) To understand how a coordinating body could best help you/your organization.

### Project knowledge and background

2. Are you familiar with the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives and have you had a chance to review what we sent you?

### Involvement with LCCs

3. How involved are you/your organization with the LCCs and what does this involvement entail?

### LCC National Council purpose

4. How would you describe your vision for an LCC National Council? Or in other words, what does a successful LCC National Council look like to you?
5. What do you think should be the purpose of a LCC National Council?
6. We have identified two goals for the Council: to engage partners at the national level, and to improve coordination within and across partner organizations. What additional goals would you like to see the LCC National Council achieve?
7. Is there any way, apart from an LCC National Council, to get these goals fulfilled with a degree of certainty?
8. What types of issues might an LCC National Council address?
  - a) Are there types of issues that an LCC National Council should *not* address?
9. What opportunities do you see for an LCC National Council?

### LCC National Council structure

10. Do you have any suggestions on how to develop a streamlined approach for communication from multiple agencies to the LCCs and vice versa?
  - a) Should that be a key role of an LCC National Council?
11. What are your ideas regarding an LCC National Council structure?
12. Do you have experience with another similar organization that would provide a good model?
  - a) If so, which one(s)?
13. Who should be part of an LCC National Council?
  - a) Do you see a role for your organization?
14. Are there barriers you see to an LCC National Council being successful? If so, what?
15. Do you see any barriers or challenges within your organization that influence or affect your willingness or ability to participate? Recommendations on how to address them?

### Next steps

16. Would you like to be engaged in the development of an LCC National Council?
  - a) Participate in strategy sessions
  - b) Review draft recommendations
  - c) Stay informed
  - d) Other
17. Do you have any other thoughts / comments?

## Appendix B. DOI Interviewees

DOI Organization	Interviewee	Title
Bureau of Indian Affairs	William Walker	Southwest Regional Director
Bureau of Land Management	Carl Rountree	Director, National Landscape Conservation System
Bureau of Land Management	Ed Roberson	Assistant Director, Renewable Resources and Planning
Bureau of Reclamation	Mike Connor	Commissioner
Department of the Interior	Elizabeth Klein	Counselor to the Deputy Secretary
Land and Minerals Management	Marcilynn Burke	Acting Assistant Secretary
National Park Service	Jonathan Jarvis	Director
National Park Service	Leigh Welling	Climate Change Coordinator
National Park Service	Gary Machlis	Science Advisor to the Director
Office of Policy Analysis	Joel Clement	Director
Policy Management and Budget	Rhea Suh	Assistant Secretary
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Daniel Ashe	Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Greg Siekaniec	Deputy Director for Policy
U.S. Geological Survey	Suzette Kimball	Deputy Director
U.S. Geological Survey	Anne Kinsinger	Director, Ecosystems
U.S. Geological Survey	Matt Larsen	Associate Director, Climate and Land Use Change

## Appendix C. National Partner Interviewees

Partner Organizations	Interviewee	Title
Alaska Department of Fish and Game	Doug Vincent-Lang	Coordinator
Arizona Game and Fish Department	Larry Voyles	Director
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies	Ron Regan	Executive Director
Audubon Society	Greg Butcher	Director
Ducks Unlimited	Rebecca Humphries	Director
Illinois Department of Natural Resources	Mark Miller	Director
Intertribal Agricultural Council	Ross Racine	Executive Director
Intertribal Timber Council	Don Motanic	Technical Specialist
Kamehameha Schools	Ulalia Woodside	Regional Assets Manager
Massachusetts Department of Fish and Wildlife	John O'Leary	Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy Coordinator
Michigan State University	Dr. Kyle Pows Whyte	Associate Professor
National Association of Counties	Lenny Eliason	President
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	Roger Griffis	Climate Change Coordinator
National Recreation and Park Association	Barbara Tulipane	CEO
National Water Resources Association	Wade Noble	President
National Wildlife Federation	Bruce Stein	Director
Native American Fish & Wildlife Society	Fred Matt	Executive Director
Native American Land Conservancy	Dr. Kurt Russo	Director
New York Department of Environmental Conservation	Patricia Riexinger	Director
North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission	Mallory Martin	Executive Director

Partner Organizations	Interviewee	Title
North Dakota Game and Fish Department	Steve Dyke	Conservation Supervisor
Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency	Ed Carter	Executive Director
Texas Parks & Wildlife Department	Carter Smith	Executive Director
The Nature Conservancy	Christy Plumer	Director, Federal Lands Program
The Nature Conservancy	David Mehlman	Director, Migratory Bird Program
The Wildlife Society	Michael Hutchins	Executive Director
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Chip Smith	Office of Assistant Secretary to the Army
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	Anne Neale	Landscape Ecology Scientist
U.S. Forest Service	Cal Joyner	Director
U.S. Forest Service	David Cleaves	Director
U.S. Forest Service	Jim Pena	Acting Deputy Chief for NFS
Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries	Dave Whitehurst	Director, Bureau of Wildlife Resources
Western Governors' Association Wildlife Council	Madeleine West	Program Manager