

LCC National Council Charter Review: Response to Comments

Background

In late 2012, the LCC National strategy team sought feedback on the proposed purpose, goals, organizational framework, and composition outlined in the draft charter for the LCC National Council. To obtain partner input, the draft charter was broadly distributed through a series of webinars and via email communication. Partners and other interested parties were encouraged to submit comments.

The strategy team received written submissions from the following organizations: California LCC, Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Department, National Park Service, New Mexico Game and Fish Department, NOAA Fisheries Caribbean Field Office, North Atlantic LCC, Plains & Prairie Potholes LCC, Practitioners' Network for Large Landscape Conservation, Pacific Islands Climate Change Cooperative, U.S. Department of Defense, and the U.S. Forest Service. In addition, comments and questions were received via three public webinars with approximately 80 attendees, and a webinar for the LCC Coordinators Team (LCT).

Feedback was received on multiple aspects of the draft charter. The table below outlines the number of comments received on different components of the draft charter.

Comment Category	Number of Comments
Purpose	7
Goals	14
Selection Criteria	7
Council Composition	18
Other Comments	20

This document provides a broad synthesis of themes that were heard and indicates how the strategy team chose to respond to suggested changes. In general, the strategy team did not respond to detailed, editorial comments because the team was looking for broader, conceptual feedback on the primary components of the draft charter.

Purpose

Comments received on the LCC National Council purpose called for increased specificity and a clarification of the Council's focus and structure.

The strategy team responded to comments on Council purpose in the following ways:

- A description of the Council's purpose to support the LCC network in all its diversity was included in the LCC National Council Final Charter. The Charter now clarifies that although the LCC network is focused on fish and wildlife conservation and climate change, individual LCCs may have different regional focus areas that include cultural resources and broader natural

resource issues. The LCC National Council will address these issues as they arise within the context of individual LCCs.

- The draft charter was revised to clarify that the LCC National Council is not meant to be an umbrella organization for all landscape-scale initiatives. Rather, the Council is meant to support the mission of the LCC network and engage with other landscape-scale initiatives to better support the network.
- The strategy team chose not to include additional specificity about the Council's function and how Council decisions will be implemented. Strategy team members felt that Council operations and implementation were best left for the Council itself to determine, and will be codified in operating guidelines.
- One commenter suggested that a forum approach could be more useful than a Council structure. Throughout a year of discussion about potential structures, the strategy team developed the Council model that is outlined in the Final Charter. Following the discussion that took place over that time period and the agreements that emerged from those discussions, the strategy team decided to remain with the Council model as it is currently reflected in the Charter. The strategy team also emphasized that the Council is intended to facilitate and support the LCC network, and as such, all interested partners are encouraged to attend meetings.
- In response to concerns about the need to coordinate with other conservation initiatives, the strategy team reaffirmed that the LCC National Council is intended to help coordinate between LCCs and other place-based conservation efforts by including other Major Partnership participants on the Council.

Goals

Comments received on LCC National Council goals focused on (1) clarifying the Council's relationship to national conservation initiatives and (2) clarifying the function and scope of the LCC National Council.

The strategy team did not change any of the goals outlined in the Charter, but did choose to:

- Clarify that the Council's goal is not to integrate all national initiatives under one umbrella.
- Emphasize in the introduction that development of a strategy to maximize opportunities for input and information sharing between the LCCs and the LCC National Council is one key topic that the Council should address when convened.
- Include the LCC network vision, mission, and guiding principles as an appendix to the Final Charter to clarify LCC network goals that the LCC National Council will support.
- Clarify that (1) the LCC network was established to address landscape-scale stressors such as climate change, as well as other freshwater, coastal, and marine issues, and (2) the LCC National Council will consider a wide range of such issues to support the LCC network in all its diversity.
- Clarify that the LCC National Council will address cultural resource and heritage preservation issues when those issues arise within individual LCCs working on such issues.

The strategy team’s responses to other comments and questions regarding Council goals include the following:

- One commenter suggested deleting the State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAP) as an example of a national conservation initiative. The strategy team felt the SWAPs are an important conservation initiative both regionally and nationally, so the team chose not to delete them as an example.
- The strategy team chose to forward several specific suggestions to the LCC National Council for consideration once the Council has convened, including: (1) inclusion of National Ocean Policy as a national conservation initiative with which to coordinate; (2) engaging national boards of major conservation initiatives; (3) developing a process for responding to conflicts; (4) leveraging science and technology capabilities; (5) adding more specific goal statements to the Charter; and (6) suggesting activities for the LCC National Council to consider.

Selection Criteria

Comments received on selection criteria called for 1) a balance of national and regional representation, and 2) consideration of Island perspectives when selecting members.

Through development of detailed selection processes and adjustments to the composition of the Council (see below), the strategy team seeks to populate the LCC Council in a way that represents the entire geographic area of the LCC network, including national, regional, international, and Island perspectives.

Composition

Comments received on LCC National Council composition called for additional representation on the Council, clarification of existing seats, and term limits.

After careful consideration of suggested changes to Council composition, the strategy team agreed to keep the size at 27 participants, but changed the composition to include additional tribal, international, and indigenous perspectives. The strategy team collectively agreed that 27 participants is a maximum number of participants that can work together effectively, so compromises were made to increase the inclusiveness of the Council without exceeding that number.

In the final Charter, the strategy team specifically:

- Clarified that the at-large membership category may include Commonwealths and U.S. territories as potential members.
- Clarified that the “Tribal representative” category is meant to include only U.S. federally-recognized tribes and Alaska Natives, and changed the number of tribal participants from four to three.
- Created a new Indigenous category for First Nations, Pacific Islanders, Caribbean peoples, Native Hawaiians, and other indigenous peoples.

- Changed the composition of the international participants to include one from Canada, one from Mexico, and two from any non-U.S. nation within the LCC geography, including Canada and Mexico.
- Clarified that the target representatives for state agencies are U.S. state agency directors.

The strategy team’s responses to other comments received on Council composition include:

- A complete listing of all potential organizations, governments, and agencies that could apply for at-large positions was not included in the final Charter, as the strategy team felt this was unnecessarily detailed for the Charter.
- Whether or not the U.S. Caribbean will be included as one of the state agency director seats will be decided by the relevant regional fish and wildlife association.
- The recommendation that a different state selection process be used will be forwarded to the LCC National Council for future consideration.
- The strategy team recognizes that having additional LCC representation would be useful, and encourages LCC chairs and others to attend meetings to ensure their voices are heard.

Other Comments

Other comments received on the draft charter included (1) a call for clarification of how the LCC National Council will work and communicate with partners, (2) a question of whether participation on the Council is voluntary or if funding will be provided, (3) a call for federal agencies to coordinate landscape-scale conservation efforts beyond the LCCs, (4) the recommendation of a Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) advisory group format for the LCC National Council, and (5) minor adjustments to the proposed decision-making process.

In response, the strategy team revised the final Charter in the following ways:

- Clarified, in general terms, how the LCC National Council will work and how it will communicate with partners. Details about these processes will be left for the Council to determine once it has been convened.
- Revised decision-making process to establish a mechanism for recording minority opinions and concerns.

The strategy team’s responses to other comments received include the following:

- The strategy team prepared a draft “white paper” outlining the need for improved federal-level coordination across agencies on the wide array of landscape-scale conservation issues. This white paper will be forwarded to the LCC National Council for their consideration.
- Travel funding will be provided on an “as needed” basis for federally-recognized tribal participants. Once convened, the LCC National Council may expand the travel funding policy, but at this time, all other Council participants are responsible for funding their own travel.
- The strategy team developed the Charter with the assumption that the LCC National Council would be a partnership of partnerships, and not a FACA (Federal Advisory Committee Act)

advisory committee. Since that time, the Department of Interior Office of the Solicitor reviewed the Charter and confirmed that FACA does not apply to the work of the LCC National Council.

Conclusion and Next Steps

After collecting and reviewing all comments received, the strategy team produced the attached final LCC National Council Charter. This document will be used to convene the first LCC National Council.

All elements of this Charter, including Council composition and membership, will be revisited by the LCC National Council within the first two years of operation. During this time, the Council will revise the Charter as needed and appropriate to create a final operating document.