



ABOUT THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES REVIEW

In 2014, Congress directed the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to engage the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to review the LCCs. After considering significant input from state and federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders from the conservation community, the Academy released its *Review of the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives* on December 3, 2015.

The report is available at <http://bit.ly/NAS-LCCs>.

NAS REVIEW: OBJECTIVES

The objective of the NAS review was to evaluate the purpose, goals and scientific merit of the LCC program within the context of other similar programs, and to determine whether there has been measurable improvements in the health of fish, wildlife and their habitats as a result of the program. The Academy was also tasked to examine the evaluation process for the program.

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NAS REVIEW: FINDINGS

The 12-person NAS review committee concluded:

THERE IS A NATIONAL NEED FOR A LANDSCAPE APPROACH
The nation needs to take a landscape approach to conservation and that the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) is justified addressing this need with the LCCs.

LCCS ARE UNIQUE

The committee determined that there is no other federal program like the LCCs that is designed to address landscape conservation needs at a national scale for all natural and cultural resources that bridges research and management.

The committee also noted the LCCs' ability to create opportunities for identifying common conservation goals and leveraging efforts of diverse partners at a much greater scale than any one entity could achieve alone.

Moreover, the committee found that consolidation of the LCCs with other "similar" types of programs such as Migratory Bird Joint Ventures and Climate Science Centers is not needed given the distinct roles of each of the programs.

LCCS CAN POINT TO EARLY SUCCESSES

While noting that the LCCs are still relatively new, the committee recognized that the LCC Network has made progress toward its high-level strategic goals of addressing conservation strategy, developing collaborative conservation and advancing science.

NAS REVIEW: RECOMMENDATIONS

The NAS review committee offered specific recommendations and a number of observations for guiding improvements to the LCC Network and LCCs:

LCC STRATEGIC PLAN & PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- » LCCs should conduct a network-wide evaluation on an ongoing basis to guide the work of the LCC Network as a whole. LCCs should also perform periodic evaluations for specific LCCs that have existed long enough to have had a perceptible impact on "end outcomes." Performance measures should align with LCC Network strategic goals.
- » The LCC Network should improve its evaluation process to better capture the contributions made by all partner agencies or groups toward common objectives.

CONSERVATION DESIGN

- » The NAS review acknowledged the importance of Design to LCC efforts, but found LCC Network guidance about Design should be improved.

NAS REVIEW: RECOMMENDATIONS, CONT'D

COLLABORATIVE CONSERVATION

- » DOI should review the landscape and habitat conservation efforts, especially the Joint Ventures and the LCCs, to identify opportunities for improved coordination.
- » Special consideration should be given to the limited capacity of state agency partners to participate in multiple efforts simultaneously.
- » The LCC and Climate Science Center programs should: be more clearly delineated; explicitly state how research efforts differ and complement each other; identify and build on existing examples of network-wide coordination; and make adjustments as appropriate.

NAS REVIEW: PROGRESS UPDATE

Since the report's release, the LCC Network has conducted a deeper analysis of the review and established a "Next Steps" team and set of working groups to plan, prioritize, and implement actions for addressing the NAS recommendations.

The LCC Network is using the Academy's report to set a trajectory for continual improvement; ensure the program is addressing landscape-scale conservation priorities; and demonstrate the benefits of landscape conservation and the LCCs to stakeholders and the nation.

In June 2016, the LCC Network welcomed more than 70 staff members hailing from each of the LCCs and federal, state, and non-governmental organizations to an all-hands meeting in St. Louis, MO to specifically discuss strategic planning/ performance evaluation and Landscape Conservation Design (LCD).

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

In May 2016, the Performance Evaluation working group of the Next Steps team held a workshop with NAS review panelists and other experts to better understand how to integrate LCC Network Strategic Plan revisions and performance evaluation.

Since the all-hands LCC Network meeting, the group has been revising the strategic plan's goals, objectives, and performance measures. The LCC Network has initiated the process to hire a consulting expert to assist in finalizing the work.

LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION DESIGN (LCD)

Through a series of virtual and in-person workshops, the LCC Design working group, joined by national experts, has produced eight *Characteristics of LCC Landscape Conservation Designs*, which are available online at www.lccnetwork.org. The team has also developed a draft guidance document focused on LCD Best Practices. The final guidance document is estimated to be available online in December 2016.

The LCC Design group has also developed the first-ever, comprehensive database of LCC LCDs along with an associated online geospatial map.

In 2016, individual LCCs have increased their efforts to develop and refine LCDs and they are working on a number of multi-LCC designs such as the Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy.

NATIONAL COLLABORATION

The Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) convened a task force to assess the states' relationships with LCCs. Recommendations from the task force were approved by state fish and wildlife agency directors at AFWA's September 2016 Annual Meeting.

One recommendation moves to establish a LCC Joint Task Force (JTF) between AFWA and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to explore how state agencies can more fully engage in and support LCCs. The LCC JTF is expected to begin meeting in early 2017.

The LCC Network continues to reach out to Migratory Bird Joint Ventures, Fish Habitat Partnerships and Climate Science Centers among others to discuss further opportunities for improving integration and collaboration.

ABOUT LCCS

Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) are public-private partnerships working together to address landscape and seascape scale conservation issues. There are 22 LCCs across North America and the Caribbean and the Pacific Islands.



The Basin and Range area of southeastern Nevada, an iconic American landscape BOB WICK/BLM