Overview: Eastern Tallgrass Prairie & Big Rivers Landscape Conservation Cooperative Presentation before The National Academies December 16, 2014

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Overview of presentation:
• Quick journey down memory lane
• Why LCCs are needed now
• How one of the 22 LCCs was “stood up”
• How we found our niche
• Organizational and strategic approach
• How a Midwest LCC ended up so involved with the Gulf hypoxia problem
• Role of convener
• Where do we go from here?

LCCs? Why now?
The ETPBR LCC experience

Or- “How the heck did we get here?”

Salmon version of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation

With apologies to Leopold, Darling, Roosevelt, Shoemaker and many others
Example- Indiana DNR State Agency Authorities

- Chapter 2. Division of Fish and Wildlife
- Administration of article
- Sec. 2. The division of fish and wildlife shall administer this article.
- Duties of director
- Sec. 3. The director shall do the following:
  - (1) Provide for the protection, reproduction, care, management, survival, and regulation of wild animal populations regardless of whether the wild animals are present on public or private property in Indiana.
  - (2) Organize and pursue a program of research and management of wild animals that will serve the best interests of the resources and the people of Indiana.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The Mission of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service: working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

Authorities:
- Migratory Birds
- Endangered Species
- Inter-jurisdictional fishes
- National Wildlife Refuge system
- Others

Funding model- States:

- Based on user-pay concept
- Sale of sport hunting and fishing licenses
- Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (WSFR) funds from excise tax on hunting arms, ammo, fishing tackle, etc.
- State Wildlife Grant funds: annual (?) appropriation from Congress
Federal Funding

- Annual Budget Battles
- Omnibus Legislation
- Continuing Resolutions
- Competition among Federal Agencies
- Lack of certainty
Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.  **Albert Einstein**

NA Model of Conservation “same ol’ thing”:

**States:**
- Sell (fewer & fewer) hunting and fishing licenses
- Utilize WSFR funds for eligible projects
- Continually raise fees to stay ahead of inflation

**Federal Agencies:**
- Annual budget battles for appropriated funds (conservation has low priority compared to defense, human health services, education, etc.)

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**Aldo never told us about these things:**

The N.A. model was a tool to manage fish and wildlife resources in the early 1900’s. I doubt the visionary crafters ever dreamed it would be same tool managers would use to tackle:

- Captive hunting facilities, transportation, disease issues, containment
- Ever increasing cost to purchase land and manage wildlife habitat
- Environmental unit staff and permitting expenses
- Communications, Facebook, social media, tweeting
- Invasive species control on fish and wildlife management areas, rivers & lakes.
- Nuisance wildlife problems- such as cougars, Canada geese, deer in cities
- Wildlife disease issues such as CWD or Whirling disease in trout
- Non game program expenses
- Poaching and international transportation of protected animals for black markets.
- And many, many more

**The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation is showing its age**
Looking at evolving issues such as loss of prairies, loss of large river habitat, invasive species, climate change, excess nutrients flowing into our waterways, loss of relevancy spurred by urbanization:

*Are these really issues that can best be tackled state by state, agency by agency or NGO by NGO?*

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More than ever- responding to today’s conservation challenges requires cooperation
Keep in mind that Political boundaries are not respected by wildlife

How would you suggest we fix this “wicked” problem?

- You’d start out with some visionary leaders with the guts and the integrity to say that the model we operate under needs evaluation.
- You’d have to be willing to put your career on the line and go to Congress to secure funding for a new enterprise to bring conservations at the highest level possible together at a “Common Table” to have these crucial conversations.
- You’d need to assemble a team of coordinators to bring these entities together.
- It has to be based on sound science, so you’d need a team of science coordinators to work together to assure the biology is above reproach.
- You would need to decide where to do this. The dreaded lines on a map. Do that.
- And finally you’d need a name—

  we called ours Landscape Conservation Cooperatives

Secretarial Order 3289

“...Interior bureaus and agencies must work together, and with other federal, state, tribal and local governments, and private landowner partners, to develop landscape-level strategies for understanding and responding to climate change impacts.”
Landscape Conservation Cooperatives: Geographic Areas

Cooperative conservation isn’t really all that new? Traditionally on a case by case basis

Usually on a project by project basis. Then team approach dissolves.
Examples:
- Gas/Oil Pipelines
- Multi-State HCPs
- Transmission corridors
- Wind energy corridors
- Interstate Highways
- Any project that required landscape view

Eastern Tallgrass Prairie & Big Rivers LCC
ETPBR LCC Team

- Glen Salmon, LCC Coordinator
- Dr. Gwen White, Science Coordinator
- Kristin Shaw, Indiana Univ. MS SPEA Fellow
- Megan Cross, Univ. of MN Master student
- TAG Coordinators @ Illinois N.H.S.
  - Lama BouFajreldin
  - James Ellis
  - Andrew Stephenson
  - Craig Miller

LCCs = Natural Resource Management
A Think/Strategy/Action Tank for Agencies & Organizations

ETPBR LCC - Status?

- Glen Salmon starts as Coordinator: July 2011
- Preliminary Planning meeting w/ States: January 2012, Springfield IL
- Interim Steering Committee meeting: May 2012, Springfield IL
- Strategic Visioning Retreat: Sept. 2012, Dickson Mounds IL
- Dr. Gwen White hired as Science Coord.: October 2012
- Full Steering Committee meeting: January 2013, Dubuque IA
- Strategic Plan finalized: February 2013
- Full Steering Committee meeting: July 2013, Indianapolis IN
- Full Steering Committee meeting: January 2014, St. Louis MO
- Full Steering Committee meeting: July 2014, Nebraska City NE
- Next Steering Committee meeting: January 2015, Glenview IL
Get the gang together for a strategic planning retreat

Come up with a plan of action

Areas of concentration for ETPBR LCC

• 1. River Restoration techniques
• 2. Prairie Restoration techniques
• 3. Urban Conservation
• 4. Agroecology
  * Mississippi River/Gulf Hypoxia effort

Strategy: Form a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) around each area of concentration.
TAGs: Technical Advisory Groups

- MS student Kristin runs one TAG, others are run through ILNHS
- Serve as the ETPBR LCC Science Committee
- Approximately 250 Midwest researchers, NGO staff, State and Federal scientists
- Annually used to build our "business plan" to select areas of research

Annual planning process-overview

ETPBR annual planning process

1) TAGers Review Strategic Plan
2) TAG Webinar to discuss critical research issues.
3) Use feedback to draft annual business plan
4) Review of business plan by TAGs
5) Select potential area of research
6) Steering Committee concurrence
7) Initiate RFP process
What are we doing messing around with the Gulf of Mexico?

LCCs: how can we be part of the overall solution

Niche: Create more opportunities to bring the wildlife community to the table.

Recognize that funding for State Natural Resource agencies:
- Primarily Sporting license based
- Excise Tax on sporting gear (arms, ammo, fishing gear, etc.)
- Must connect habitat improvements and public opportunities in order to increase their participation
- Difficult for them to engage on water quality projects

Engage while always being respectful of the other agencies that have been at work for 20+ years in this endeavor.

State DNRs and Fish and Wildlife Service Private Lands biologists routinely work with a mix of partners (NRCS, Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, local conservation groups, etc.) to create habitat opportunities on agricultural lands.
Convener role may be most critical

Provide “Common Table”

- Urban Conservation - EPIC
- MRB/GH
- Floodplain Science Network
- Bottomland Hardwoods network
- Prairie restoration w/ PRIAT
- STRIPS expansion
- Zoo based- Milkweeds for Monarchs

Where do we go from here?

Knowing what we know today; do we expect managing our natural resources going forward?

- To become more, or less complicated?
- To require more, or less cooperation?
- To require stretching existing funding resources?
- To need a strategic convening forum?

Questions for Glen?