

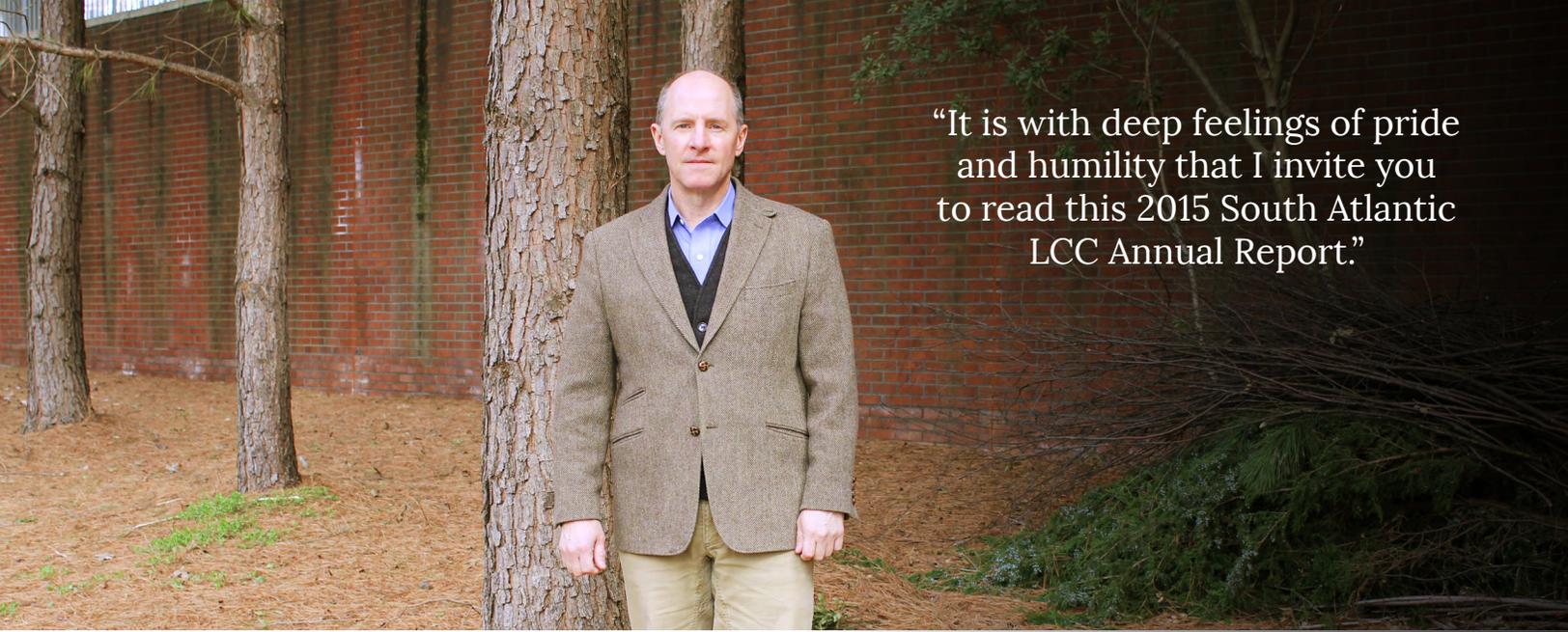
SOUTH ATLANTIC LCC

# ANNUAL REPORT

2015



SOUTH ATLANTIC  
LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION COOPERATIVE



“It is with deep feelings of pride and humility that I invite you to read this 2015 South Atlantic LCC Annual Report.”

# MESSAGE FROM THE COORDINATOR

It is with deep feelings of pride and humility that I invite you to read this 2015 South Atlantic LCC Annual Report. Pride—because as you will see, your cooperative has been very successful in accomplishing an extremely impressive body of work during the past year. This is a group that I’m very proud to be associated with. Humility—in recognizing that these accomplishments stem from the solid foundation upon which your cooperative was built, resulting from the hard work and dedication of South Atlantic LCC Coordinator Ken McDermond, whose untimely death in 2015 left a void throughout the LCC community. Ken established a great trajectory for our collective conservation work, and his contributions to the arc of accomplishment for the LCC enterprise are significant and lasting.

It is also important to recognize the work of the Steering Committee in helping to provide the guidance and strategic direction for the work of your cooperative. Having strong diversity of experience and leadership represented by more than 15 top-notch conservationists is invaluable in determining appropriate priorities and allocations of your cooperative’s resources. The Steering Committee is a great asset and contributor to the work of the South Atlantic LCC.

Finally, I must admit that I made very little personal contribution toward the fine work described in this report. I began my role as your Coordinator in mid-November 2015; hardly enough time to say hello before taking off for the holidays. The South Atlantic LCC staff made me feel welcome and right at home on day one. And as I’ve learned since then, it takes a whole lot of collective effort to develop the products and provide the support necessary for conservation on a landscape scale.

So, take a look at this 2015 Annual Report with the knowledge that the stage is set for even more conservation accomplishment in the coming years. And as always, keep up with your LCC by checking us out online at <http://southatlanticlcc.org>.

Mallory G. Martin

# WHO WE ARE

**Our vision:** A landscape that sustains the nation's natural and cultural resources for current and future generations.

The South Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC) is a partnership dedicated to conserving our natural and cultural resources for future generations. We're here to help get things done—for resilient communities, healthy fish and wildlife populations, clean water, and working forests.

Your cooperative is made up of 800 individuals from federal agencies, states, tribes, non-profits, universities and other groups. Together, we're developing a blueprint for action to sustain the lands and waters of our region in the face of threats like climate change and urbanization.

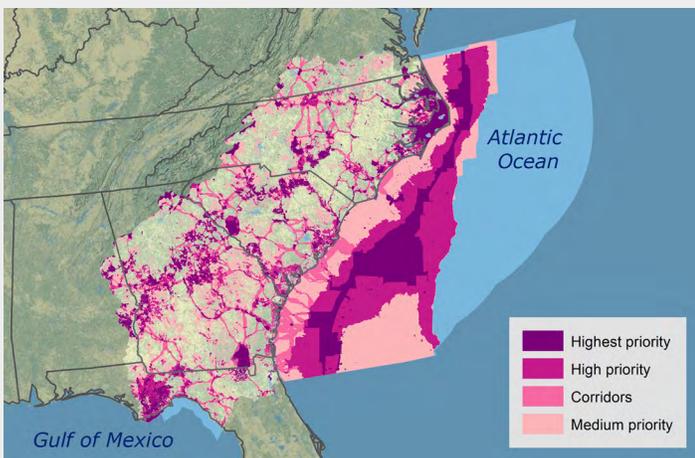
The South Atlantic LCC is part of a broader LCC Network of 22 cooperatives across North America and the U.S. Pacific and Caribbean Islands.



The South Atlantic LCC spans parts of six states, including U.S. waters to 200 miles offshore.

# WHAT WE DO

**Our mission:** Facilitate conservation actions that sustain natural and cultural resources, guided by a shared adaptive blueprint.



Conservation Blueprint 2.0 prioritizes the lands and waters of the South Atlantic based on ecological indicator models and a connectivity analysis.

## Design and achieve a blueprint for the future

The Conservation Blueprint is a living spatial plan to conserve natural and cultural resources for future generations. It prioritizes opportunities for shared conservation action.

## Develop shared indicators of ecosystem health

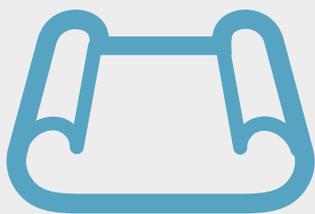
We also identify and monitor key indicators that help us measure the overall health of the South Atlantic's complex ecosystems.

## Track progress toward improving the state of the South Atlantic

The *State of the South Atlantic* measures the current condition of the indicators and provides a report card for the region's ecosystem health.

# NEW THIS YEAR

In 2015, your cooperative released a data-driven version of the Conservation Blueprint and a user-friendly online viewer. We also debuted an ecosystem report card that assesses indicator condition.



## Blueprint 2.0

Released in June 2015, Blueprint 2.0 is completely data-driven, based on ecosystem indicator condition and connectivity. It spans the terrestrial, freshwater, and marine environments of the South Atlantic region at a fine (200 m) spatial scale. It incorporates sea-level rise and urbanization models, allowing you to explore priority areas that are likely to change.

So far, more than 400 people from over 100 different organizations have actively participated in developing the Blueprint!

<http://southatlanticlcc.org/blueprint>



## State of the South Atlantic

The first official *State of the South Atlantic* report was released in March 2015. By measuring and grading the current condition of the ecosystem indicators, this assessment captures a snapshot of the health of our region's lands and waters.

With a combination of colorful illustrations, graphics, photos and meaningful measurements, the *State of the South Atlantic* paints a comprehensive picture of where we live and where we stand.

<http://southatlanticlcc.org/state-of-the-south-atlantic/>



## Simple Viewer

Launched in January 2015, the Simple Viewer summarizes the Conservation Blueprint at a subwatershed and marine lease block scale. You'll also find information about ecosystem indicators, land cover, and protection status. It's an easy way to find your part of this shared strategy!

<http://blueprint.southatlanticlcc.org>

To overlay additional datasets, view indicator layers, and download Blueprint data, you can use the Conservation Planning Atlas (CPA).

<http://salcc.databasin.org>

# THE BLUEPRINT IN ACTION

The Steering Committee intends the Blueprint to become a “gold standard” for guiding large landscape conservation in the South Atlantic, so using it to facilitate conservation action is a top priority.

## Blueprint brings over \$750,000 in longleaf fire funds to the South Atlantic

In June 2015, the Blueprint, ecosystem indicators, and strong partner relationships in the South Atlantic LCC helped secure \$770,000 from the Department of Interior Wildland Fire Resilient Landscapes Program in the first year alone. The funding will support prescribed burning in longleaf pine focus areas within the cooperative geography.

Staff, training, and aerial support will be anchored around key longleaf refuges and parks, maintaining and restoring prescribed fire not just on federal lands, but on nearby state, private, and non-profit lands as well. This project will benefit the fire-dependent longleaf pine ecosystem, including rare species like the red-cockaded woodpecker. The indicators also serve as shared measures of the project’s success, demonstrating the impact of the burns on the integrity of the pine and prairie system.

## Blueprint helps protect coastal Georgia wetlands



Eamonn Leonard, Nongame Natural Resources Biologist

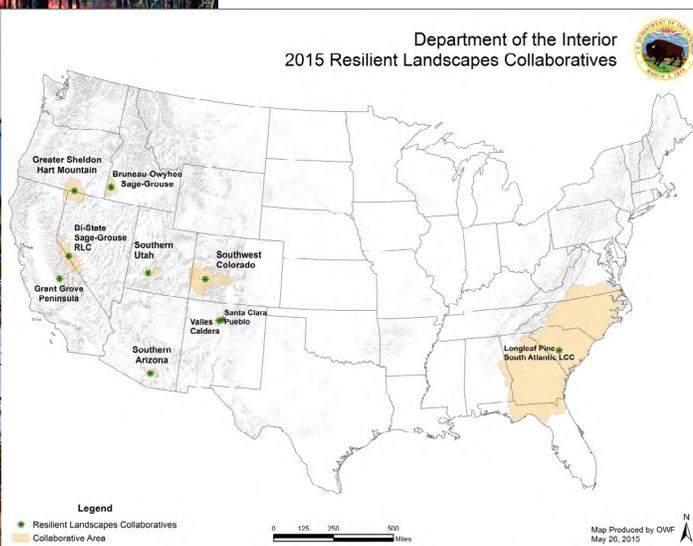
## Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

Eamonn and other Georgia DNR staff used Blueprint 2.0 to support two successful National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program proposals submitted in June 2015. The \$2 million awarded will help protect over 1,500 acres of habitat important for estuarine-dependent fish and imperiled plant and animal species on the lower Altamaha River and St. Simons Island.

U.S. Forest Service/Bugwood.org



Kat Mordcaai



# THE BLUEPRINT IN ACTION

...but wait, there's more!

## Blueprint supports conservation of South Carolina riparian forest



Anna Smith, State Wildlife Grants Coordinator

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

Anna referenced the Blueprint in a September 2015 proposal that successfully secured over \$1 million from the Forest Legacy Program to fund the protection of forest alongside the Savannah River. The almost 1,000 acres of high-quality pine and forested wetland habitat are ideally positioned to connect to a nearby Wildlife Management Area and Sumter National Forest.

## Blueprint informs regional fish & wildlife habitat prioritization

Drawing on lessons learned in the wake of Hurricane Sandy, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) recognized the need to identify conservation priorities before the next disaster strikes. To inform future project funding, NFWF sponsored a rapid assessment of fish and wildlife habitat at two scales--across the broader South Atlantic region and locally within the Cape Fear River watershed.

The South Atlantic LCC helped connect a coalition of partners that submitted a successful proposal in September 2015, including the Cape Fear River

Partnership, NatureServe, and the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program. The assessment anchored the Cape Fear River watershed prioritization around Natural Heritage data, and the broader South Atlantic prioritization around Conservation Blueprint 2.0 and the Florida Critical Lands and Waters Identification Project (CLIP). Efforts to integrate spatial priorities across the boundaries of neighboring LCCs through the Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy (SECAS) laid the groundwork for quickly combining Blueprint 2.0 with Florida CLIP.



Tom MacKenzie/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

# REFINING THE BLUEPRINT

Improving the science underlying the Blueprint is another major focus for the South Atlantic LCC, so we're continuing with an annual revision cycle for the Blueprint and ecosystem indicators.

## Two new projects to improve the Blueprint & remove barriers to conservation action



### Linking conservation to urban planning

A new project with the American Planning Association is strengthening relationships between conservation and planning professionals and improving the Blueprint's depiction of shared interests across the rural-urban spectrum. It will refine ecosystem indicator models in and near cities and enhance the Blueprint's corridor routing in urban and suburban areas.

Participation by the urban and local planning community is critical to shaping future versions of the Blueprint, and implementing this plan for shared action.



### Connecting coastal actions to marine impacts

The South Atlantic LCC is collaborating with marine and coastal modelers and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council to develop an integrated ecosystem model for the region. The project will connect and improve marine and estuarine ecosystem models to better inform ecosystem-based management approaches for marine resources.

This will help demonstrate the offshore benefits of inland conservation actions like restoring marsh habitat and instream flow.

## Looking ahead to Blueprint 2.1



### Developing the next generation of indicators

From July through December 2015, your cooperative worked on testing and revising a subset of the ecosystem indicators in preparation for Blueprint 2.1, scheduled for release in June 2016. Blueprint 2.1 will use the same overall methods while incorporating improved models for the marine, freshwater aquatic, waterscapes, landscapes, and pine and prairie indicators.

Feedback from the broader cooperative community and the availability of better data drives the focus of the annual Blueprint and indicator update cycle.

# PROMOTING THE BLUEPRINT

Before our cooperative community can use or help improve the Blueprint, everyone needs to know what it is! So spreading the word is the third key priority for the South Atlantic LCC this year.

## Making a splash at SEAFWA 2015



In November 2015, the support of the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission helped facilitate a major role for the cooperative at the annual meeting of the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

South Atlantic LCC staff hosted an interactive exhibit and live demonstration of the Blueprint, presented on the user support process, and participated in symposia on the Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy (SECAS).

## Blueprint “road show” highlights

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries hosted a meeting bringing together all three



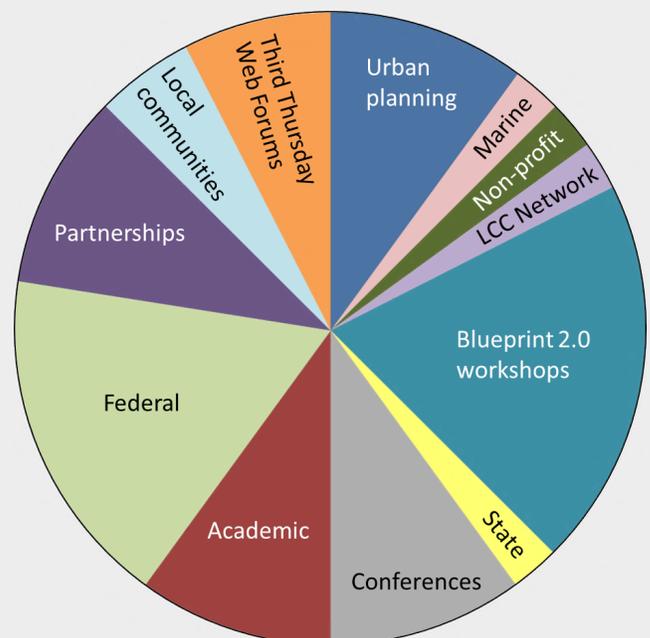
LCCs in Virginia to solicit feedback and share updates. The South Atlantic LCC and the Southeast Climate Science Center also partnered on two workshops in upstate South Carolina helping local and regional planners incorporate urban growth projections and natural resource priorities into their work. Staff also presented on the Blueprint at a Balancing Nature and Commerce workshop in Eastern North Carolina focused on generating ecotourism with the area’s unique natural assets.

## Let’s get this show on the road

# 40

CONFERENCES, WEBINARS, WORKSHOPS, & PRESENTATIONS

where South Atlantic LCC staff promoted the Blueprint



# GROWING OUR COMMUNITY

At the South Atlantic LCC, the strength of our partnership is our people.

## Meet the members of your Steering Committee

At the end of 2014, the Steering Committee approved a change in governance structure, allowing membership to expand and include other organizations. In order to grow without losing the ability to make quick decisions, the South Atlantic LCC established a smaller Executive Committee, which meets more frequently and handles more detailed operational

responsibilities. The full Steering Committee continues to vote on all major decisions like approving indicators and the Blueprint.

In 2015, your cooperative welcomed three new organizations to its Steering Committee: the Longleaf Alliance, Army Corps of Engineers, and Land Trust Alliance.



Beth Stys



David Viker



Kyle Briggs



Geno Olmi



Breck Carmichael



Rick Durbrow



Cale Godfrey



Rick Lint



Jon Ambrose



Cynthia Jester



Ken Rice



Robert Abernethy



Vacant



Ben Wigley



Elizabeth Kalies

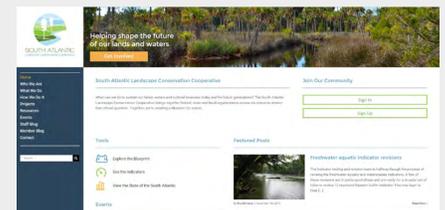


Kevin Brice



Robert Pugliese

## Conservation communication



## Website redesign

Throughout 2015, the South Atlantic LCC redesigned our website and marketing materials and launched a Facebook page. This provided the perfect opportunity to hone how we communicate our unique niche as a forum for shared conservation action guided by the Blueprint.

## Inreach & outreach

Your cooperative continued the monthly Third Thursday Web Forum, providing updates on the Blueprint and supporting projects. In partnership with the nearby Southeast Regional Climate Hub, Southeast Climate Science Center, and North Carolina State Climate Office, we also maintained the Triangle Climate and Landscape Researchers' Brown Bag lunch series.

Current as of December 31, 2015



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### South Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative

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