



# Great Northern LCC Activities & Accomplishments 2011

The Great Northern landscape contains diverse ecosystems such as the high elevation snowmelt drainages and sage-steppe of southcentral Idaho.  
Photo credit: National Park Service

*Working together  
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## **The Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative**

is a voluntary network of partners working to address common landscape conservation goals. We work together to identify common efforts and build consensus to enact a strategic regional approach to landscape conservation. We work across boundaries and jurisdictions, and share data, science, and capacity to achieve common goals.

This report summarizes our 2011 activities and accomplishments aimed at enhancing individual and collective partner implementation of landscape-level conservation. Through information sharing, capacity building, effective analysis and decision support, and collaborative networks, we are creating efficiencies and reducing the challenges of working in complex ecological systems.



*The Great Northern LCC encompasses a bi-national North American landscape. This landscape spans interior British Columbia and portions of Alberta in Canada, and extends from eastern Washington and northeastern Oregon across north and central Idaho into western Montana and Wyoming. It includes the major river systems and basins, high alpine peaks, rolling plateaus, and deep canyons of the northern Rocky Mountains and Columbia Plateau.*

## BUSINESS

### ■ Steering Committee, Advisory Team, and Strategic Conservation Framework

The Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative (GNLCC) Steering Committee, comprised of 23 member organizations, met face-to-face twice in 2011: in April, hosted by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, in Pendleton, Oregon, and in September, hosted by the National Park Service, in Whitefish, Montana. The meetings focused on refining the Governance Charter, developing the Strategic Conservation Framework, and allocating science funding. Meetings also provided an opportunity for invited scientists and managers to present their work on landscape-scale projects. These in-person meetings were augmented with conference calls every six weeks.

The GNLCC Advisory Team had one in-person meeting, hosted by the US Fish and Wildlife Service at the Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge in Cheney, Washington, March 2011. The Advisory Team had monthly conference calls and several ad-hoc calls to conduct GNLCC business.

Organizational structure and guidelines for operations have been in place since the Governance Charter was adopted in December 2010. This living document is currently under review at the request of the Province of British Columbia, who formally joined the GNLCC in April 2011.

We are developing a Strategic Conservation Framework that will provide long-term guidance and inform a more coordinated landscape conservation approach for achieving the goals of the GNLCC over a ten-year time frame. Annual work plans, a science plan, and a communications plan that articulate specific objectives and science and information needs and products, as well as costs, will tier from this Strategic Framework.

View the draft Strategic Framework and Governance documents and Steering Committee and Advisory Team meeting information: [greatnorthernlcc.org/business](http://greatnorthernlcc.org/business)

### Steering Committee member organizations



## ■ Partner Forums

Partner Forums are networks of conservation practitioners and partnerships that share landscape conservation challenges in an eco-geographic context. Through a self-defined process, field-level managers, scientists, and key conservation constituents will refine priority conservation information and scientific needs tiering down from goals and flagship priorities set forth by the Steering Committee. The Partner Forums will inform the GNLCC Strategic Conservation Framework and annual work plans, and provide input and feedback on utility and application of landscape science, tools, and information.

Partner Forums also provide a means to engage the partnership network (a more diverse and directly knowledgeable constituent) on specific conservation needs that will inform and support an adaptive management approach to on-the-ground application of landscape conservation.

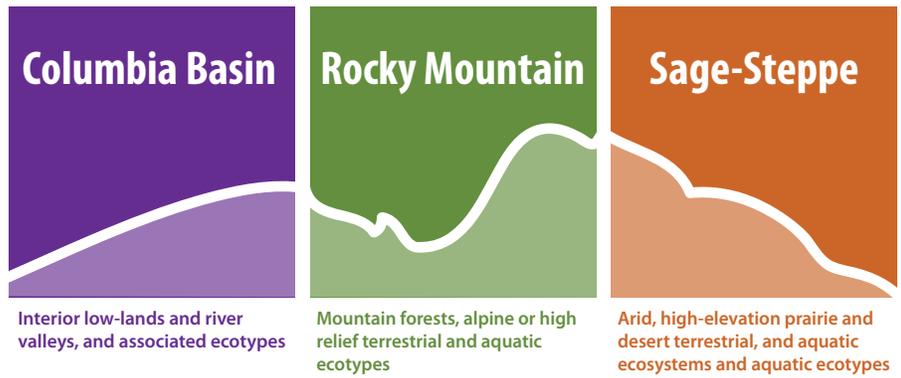
The GNLCC is providing support and structure

## PROGRAM ALIGNMENT

To create efficiencies and reduce the challenges of working in complex ecological and jurisdictional systems, GNLCC staff has focused on aligning programs from different agencies, organizations, and initiatives in 2011.

Highlights of these efforts include:

- leading the Interagency Connectivity Team of the America's Great Outdoors Initiative Crown of the Continent focal area proposal
- engaging in discussions with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation about aligning programs supporting connectivity analysis and conservation
- initiating discussions with US Forest Service on aligning GNLCC projects with the Cooperative Forest Land Restoration Project within the Great Northern area (including the Southwest Crown of the Continent Collaborative, the Clearwater Basin Collaborative, and the Tapash Sustainable Forest Collaborative)
- serving on the Assessment Management Teams for Bureau of Land Management Middle Rockies and Wyoming Basins Rapid Ecoregional Assessments.



for Partner Forums to develop for three broadly defined ecotypic areas: Columbia Basin, Rocky Mountain, and Sage-Steppe. We define ecotypic areas as ecologically relevant geographies within the Great Northern area that share similar ecological processes or systems and related landscape issues. Ecotypic areas are not discrete geographic areas; rather they represent communities of conservation practitioners that share common conservation needs at landscape scale.

Partner Forums are in the early stage of development. In August 2011, the GNLCC conducted two webinars to gather input from conservation practitioners. Development of leadership teams for the forums was initiated in December 2011. In 2012, each leadership team will host a virtual "open house" to discuss the forums and recruit practitioners.



The Rocky Mountain Front, extending 150 miles from central Montana to Canada, provides valuable migratory corridors for wildlife and outstanding recreation and hunting opportunities that benefit local communities. Photo courtesy: Becky Petrashek



## DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

### ■ Landscape Assessment Demonstration Project

Recognizing that considerable geographic and topical overlap exists among five Landscape Assessment and Conservation projects occurring in the Great Northern area, the GNLCC Steering Committee approved a Landscape Assessment Demonstration Project. The goal of this project is to support inter-project coordination, avoid duplication, and to the greatest extent possible leverage their efforts to compile information, identify data gaps, assure data quality, and be consistent in data format and standards.

The five projects are:

- Western Governors Association Crucial Habitats and Corridors Idaho-Montana Divide (supported in the State of Montana by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Critical Area Planning System [CAPS]) and Wyoming Interagency Pilot projects
- BLM Middle Rockies Rapid Eco-regional Assessment
- USFS Region 1 Integrated Restoration and Protection Strategy
- Heart of the Rockies Initiative High Divide Project

Additionally, the Steering Committee wants to assure that the data, models, and analyses created are available at scales useful to analyze conservation and management projects in terms of on-site impacts, regional context, and a changing climate. The project reflects emerging conservation principles and takes advantage of modern technology to work across jurisdictions and boundaries. This effort presents an unprecedented opportunity for collaboration among conservation organizations and agencies that has the potential to increase effectiveness and accountability towards a greater public benefit.

In 2011, project partners finalized a project agreement, developed wildlife and habitat and change agent matrices, and identified areas where collaboration could benefit all partners.

[View details about the Landscape Assessment Project:  
greatnorthernlcc.org/landscape-assessment](http://greatnorthernlcc.org/landscape-assessment)

### ■ North Fork of the Flathead River Basin Demonstration Project

In February 2010, governments of British Columbia and Montana signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that recognizes the high value of natural resources in the North Fork of the Flathead River Basin and outlines a framework for the signatories to work together with US and Canada Federal, State and Provincial, and Tribal and First Nation partners on environmental protection, climate action, and renewable and low carbon energy.

Spanning two nations, the Transboundary Flathead River Watershed extends from British Columbia into Montana, providing key connectivity habitat for fish and wildlife. Photo credit: Garth Lenz

This MOU addresses two decades of negotiations over impacts of potential mining and oil and gas development.

The GNLC is:

- supporting an executive-level working group among the Department of Interior, Department of Agriculture, State of Montana, Canadian Federal government, and the Province of British Columbia to facilitate and promote commitments of the MOU
- supporting the study *Predicting the Effects of Climate Change on Aquatic Ecosystems*, a pilot aquatic vulnerability assessment in the Flathead River System
- convening an inter-jurisdictional fisheries team to develop a collaborative work plan, including inter-jurisdictional data and information synthesis
- supporting fisheries surveys by the Province of British Columbia in support of the MOU.

## SCIENCE AND DECISION SUPPORT

### ■ Support for Landscape Science

In 2010 and 2011, GNLC funded 28 on-the-ground projects, committing over \$2.4 million to our conservation partners to improve our science knowledge, evaluate and improve management practices, and realize better coordination across the region. Funding has led to the delivery of 265 products, including over 230 novel GIS data layers.

Information products are delivered through the GNLC website and spatial data are available through LC MAP (see below). In 2011, GNLC funds were augmented by \$339,000 from the Northwest Climate Science Center for climate-focused projects deemed a high priority by the Steering Committee.

[View details of science projects and meta-information document \(describes analysis of project data, models, and tools\): greatnorthernlcc.org/supported-science-projects](http://greatnorthernlcc.org/supported-science-projects)

### ■ Decision Support and Data Integration

The Great Northern Landscape Conservation Management and Analysis Portal, LC MAP, provides a collaborative virtual workspace allowing partners of the GNLC to securely share, access, and analyze common datasets and information to further coordinated research, management, and resource conservation.

LC MAP supports large landscape conservation by:

- advancing project-level research and modeling by providing a secure virtual workspace where multiple partners can discover, assess, edit, analyze, and model common data themes in near realtime



Photo credits: bull trout, Joe Sartore; montane wetland, Mary McFadzen; sage grouse, USFWS

- facilitating data mining and discovery from the World Wide Web
- functioning as a secure repository where GNLC partners can safely store their data, custom-control access, and manage metadata using customized, intuitive data documentation tools
- taking advantage of the powerful geospatial analysis capabilities of ArcGIS 10 and its broad array of extensions.

The LC MAP user community has grown to 50 members working on collaborative projects. Discussions are underway with other LCCs about how LC MAP might serve their needs.

[View details of LC MAP, including how to apply for an account: greatnorthernlcc.org/lcmap](http://greatnorthernlcc.org/lcmap)



## OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATIONS

To effectively reach diverse and geographically dispersed audiences, the GNLC is developing an outreach and communications plan and has been implementing a suite of tactics. These tactics include presenting information to groups on-site and through webinars, hosting workshops and meetings, and disseminating information using online communication tools.

### ■ Federal Land Managers Workshop

On September 7–8, 2011, federal project leaders, land unit managers, and regional program leads who oversee management on public lands within the Great Northern area, convened in Missoula, Montana to learn more about the GNLC and discuss how agencies and organizations can work together towards a shared vision for large landscape conservation.

Workshop participants from the BLM, NPS, USFS, and USFWS identified common landscape conservation priorities and some basic strategies that might be used to achieve outcomes. The workshop also presented information on emerging landscape tools and science products such as use of remote sensing for inventory and monitoring, downscaled climate information, and use and application of distribution models to analyze connectivity. This was the first of what is envisioned as a recurring workshop.

View workshop report and presentations: [greatnorthernlcc.org/event/92](http://greatnorthernlcc.org/event/92)

### ■ Presentations

Throughout the year, GNLC staff met frequently with organizations and agencies interested in learning how the GNLC operates and opportunities for collaboration. Presentation formats included webinars, speaking engagements, briefings, and field tours.

### ■ Science Webinars

Recipients of GNLC science funding, GNLC staff, and invited scientists and resource managers presented 13 webinars in 2011 to share findings with interested individuals. On average, 40 individuals attended each webinar; at least that many viewed webinar recordings. Recordings of webinars are made available on the website and GNLC YouTube channel.

View webinars: [greatnorthernlcc.org/webinars](http://greatnorthernlcc.org/webinars) or YouTube channel: [www.youtube.com/user/GreatNorthernLCC](http://www.youtube.com/user/GreatNorthernLCC)

The Salmon River and its tributaries (Idaho), contains the greatest amount of remaining habitat for salmon and steelhead within the expansive Columbia River basin. Photo courtesy: Dona Horan

## ■ Website and Newsletter

GNLCC launched a new website registered under a “.org” domain in 2011 (since inception, the GNLCC website was maintained and hosted by the USGS – Northern Rocky Mountain Science Center). New website features include an online directory to landscape initiatives and organizations, simple databases for supported science projects, webinars and meetings, and documents, and a slide show on the home page that showcases partners and supported science projects. Social media will be incorporated to facilitate interaction with audiences and to improve the timely dissemination of new information.

We also changed the format of the quarterly GNLCC newsletter to an electronic document by subscribing to a free email marketing service. This service allows for efficient management of our mailing list, which is approaching 900 subscribers. In 2011, subscribers received two newsletters and 13 webinar announcements.

View website: [greatnorthernlcc.org](http://greatnorthernlcc.org)

Fish-eye view of the Flathead River in British Columbia.  
Photo credit: Michael Ready

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