



## ***Overview***

Following are thematic, qualitative summaries from 33 interviews of Steering Committee and subject matter experts that were conducted by Group Solutions on behalf of the Appalachian Landscape Conservation Cooperative. These sensing interviews were conducted to establish a baseline understanding of issues, challenges and priorities in advance of for the July planning workshop in Blacksburg, VA.

Results will be presented for team review and discussion in an interactive Webinar on 6/28.

## ***First the Good News***

- Strong support for the CONCEPT of AppLCC
- Credit to Jean and staff for inclusiveness and outreach: They are recognized for doing a LOT with limited resources
- Recognition nobody has the science to address landscape perspectives
- Belief this is the right way to approach boundary-less challenges.
- Bumpy start, but getting better over time
- Cultural evolution is taking place in conservation

## ***Barriers and Constraints***

### **How do we adopt a very different way of thinking?**

- Uneven recognition the LCC is “us”
- What works in some ecoregions (surrogate species) doesn’t in Appalachia
- The need to inform decision making with imperfect information
- Differing views on landscape tools: modeling, decision support and adaptive management
- Critical need for integrators; people who can look across disciplines and landscapes
- Difficulty distinguishing what we think is Landscape from what really is

### **The more we hang this on climate change, the more disservice we do to big thinking**

- It’s Inevitable...we can't do anything to stop it
- There are other things we CAN do to address current trajectories of development, energy extraction
- This is about what's NEEDED to sustain habitats; This message isn't getting communicated effectively

### **We can only move at the speed of trust**

- Working differently will involve shared resources: researchers, biologists, ID of unique competencies
- Long memories of ecological fads that have come and gone
- Perceptions LCCs are raid on local budgets

### **Capacity challenges & partner fatigue**

- A plethora of partnering demands: Why is AppLCC the one I need to pick?
- Multiple LCCs in many states force managers to make tough choices
- Political hostility in some sectors to our work

### **Restrictions on partner agencies spending dollars outside their borders**



**Congress wants on the ground tangibles, but you can't get there overnight**

### ***Our Task for July: How will we....***

- Define clear decision criteria for our 3-5 year work plan?
- i.e. if it meets 3 or more....it's a YES!
- Define what partners value and are willing to contribute toward?
- Agree to integrate AppLCC into things partners are already doing?
- Decide if our work uniquely answers critical questions?
- Connect to local and regional landscape planning?
- Balance the right blend of short-term wins, medium-term projects and long-term landscape needs?
- Gain support and involvement at the local/ground level?
- Communicate the benefits of working across borders?
- Address the cost/benefits and demonstrate value?
- Address uncertainty?
- Address making decisions with imperfect information?

### ***Our Operational plan will:***

- Help select science and action that supports good conservation decisions
- Be relevant to State and local resource managers
- Stick to our competencies and avoid trying to do too much
- Document successes by showing how AppLCC is making (or will make) a difference

### ***Big Ideas for the Operational Plan***

**We define the priorities**

- Strong consensus; not 100% (Define)

**We are the people that will get it done. Or not**

**We have a boundary-less approach**

- But maintain respect for individual jurisdictions

**The plan will show measurable, significant process on the regional issues the team selects**

- Short-term progress is vital for long-term support

**It must identify UNIQUE work that wouldn't have happened without the collaborative effort of AppLCC partners**

- Partners bring time, talent, treasure or influence

### ***What are your current thoughts on LCCs in general and your AppLCC in particular?***

**Conceptually....great!**

- It's the way we need to be working on existing threats



- General recognition States can't do this on their own
- Enable broader thinking about species/habitat diversity
- We want be part of LCCs, but don't have the bodies to participate in them all

**A rough start with state partners, but improving**

- Launched without a clear message on what LCCs were about
- Nobody could articulate what the product would be
- General credit given for evolving and responsiveness to addressing initial concerns

**Sharper definition and focus is needed**

- Appalachians are unique (biodiversity/suspicion of outsiders)
- Confusion persists on how JVs fits within LCCs
- We're seeking a common vision

***Do you think the leadership of your organization is more supportive of the LCC concept or more resistant? Why?***

**Supportive**

- Some leadership has very strong conservation vision
- Increasing support over the past 18 months
- Huge Thank YOUs for travel stipend enabling some to participate
- Supportive, as long as we have room to maneuverer

**Reservations/Wait & See**

- Unsure what a big win for the LCC looks like
- Capacity challenges: overlapping regions force partners to choose
- Are we biting off more than we can chew?
- Too much talk....not enough happening on the ground

**Oblivious**

- Not a driving issue for my leadership
- Too many other more pressing problems for us
- Uncertain a lot of our staff believes this is an issue
- Can't focus on what will be happening 20+ years out.

***What do you see as your organization's role providing support to the partnership?***

**Serve on steering committee**

**Communicate a state perspective on resource concerns**

- Share community level expertise (forest level)
- Share deep knowledge of species and ecosystems
- Share data on biological conditions and species of concern
- Inform science needs and how to convey to information users
- Share data sets for regional interpretation, data mining and benefit
- Experience and contacts



**Provide practical perspective from implementers**

- Stress the need to work with partners at a smaller scale
- We have staff (biologists and program level staff) that cut across the full spectrum of conservation issues/challenges/needs.
- Focus on practical science that is useful on the ground

**Help identify resources and capacity that support landscape efforts**

- We can better manage and control HOW energy happens
- OSM/Corps also have expertise, data, history with energy development
  - Established BMPs and close work with private companies
  - Landscape/Habitat/Air Human Health perspective are also areas of interest

***What conservation management challenges must your organization answer in the next 3-5 years?***

**What's the landscape vision of what we want?**

- How will we prioritize large-scale ecosystem restoration on a larger scale?

**How will we address the human dimensions of landscape conservation?**

- How do we get people to care about and feel connected to the environment? (Relevant to public)
- What value-added messages does public understand and respond to?
- How will landscape planning include large private property owners?

**What/when/where will the effects of habitat fragmentation be?**

- How will we identify and protect the best of the best habitats?
- Can we influence energy development to minimize disruption and negative impact?
- Can we project what the landscape will look like over time given predicted future patterns?
- How can we maintain our ecosystems by focusing on resiliency of ecosystems
- How will we frame climate readiness to align decisions/investments?

**What will the effects of energy development be on habitat, water and migration corridors?**

**Which exotic/invasive/disease battles are worth fighting?**

**How will we sustain future Agency funding when H&F participation is declining?**

**When/where will 2<sup>nd</sup> home growth and urbanization happen in my region?**

**How will we add value to State Wildlife Plans?**

How will we share data and use data to assist multiple partners?

***What conservation management challenges must your organization answer in the next 5-10 years?***

**Essentially the same for most, and...**

- What's the tipping point for climate change?
- DOI's tradition of agencies just not talking.
  - I don't rock your boat. You don't rock mine.
  - States want collaboration...they just aren't designed for it"



- Loving our National Parks & Forests to death
- New, unknown and fast moving invasives

## ***What are the possibilities for alignment of your plans with the LCCs?***

### **Majority Opinion: Uncertainty...**

- Presently most aren't very closely aligned

### **Long-range, we agree on the need to integrate efforts**

#### **LCCs can align direction and guidance on climate change and energy**

- Questions about the long term impact of energy development abound
- A clear, compelling role for AppLCC

### **SWPs updates (Due 2015)**

#### **Cross-program coordination is essential**

- LCC work will require cross-program and State funding
- Science & data needs are much greater than what individual JVs/ partnerships can fund or develop individually
- "More coordination and cooperation may have great benefit, but I don't see how this ever results in LESS work"

## ***Where are opportunities to align planning and planning resources with the LCC?***

### **Some States are beginning to consider merging plans**

### **Much within missions shouldn't require realignment**

#### **Coordination opportunities**

- Water quality/quantity work on Marcellus shale
- Coordinate approaches to Exotic/Invasive species

#### **Involve/merge regional species-focused groups**

- Integrate with Audubon flyway initiative
- AppRegional Commission planning seems an excellent candidate for quick merger/alignment

## ***Where are there alignment issues?***

### **Increasing cultural differences between Service and States**

- Different understandings of user and client groups
- FWS executives coming from different backgrounds than State partners

### **State wildlife action plans**

- Are consistent, transferrable habitat systems possible?
- The current state-by-state approach isn't working

### **Marketing our accomplishments**

- Statewide communication between sister agencies





- How LCCs communicate TO the States...and States communicate internally

**We must willing to share program funding**

- Get beyond the dependency on discretionary funding

**Understanding the unique role of mineral rights**

- If we don't own them, we can't preserve the land

**□ *What are your organization's specific expectations for your investment?* □**

**Most common response: Nothing explicit...**

- This is the right thing to do: we recognize the need for bigger conversations

**We here to help keep the LCC focused on usable, useful products**

- Information we can get and use that wouldn't be available elsewhere
- We're looking for information and tools we can use at the State level
- We'll contribute to species and habitats we have responsibility for within the state

**Demonstrate we're getting real concrete achievements for the dollar**

- Many must demonstrate value for time invested to keep participating
- We learn a lot from other states in participation; how they handle similar challenges
- Justifications don't always have to be dollar denominated

**LCCs need to be focusing on overlapping goals and objectives**

- We need tools, BPs, policy/practice change that benefit species across jurisdictions
- Our leaders expect to see how efforts are complimenting each other

**We hope to identify new sources of funding**

***What do you see as the most important goals AppLCC needs to consider in the next 3 to 5 years?***

***"Help me avoid wasting tons of time & money building sand castles"***

**Develop a common landscape vision for the Appalachians**

- Sets conservation and habitat priorities for the region
- Be THE forum working together to align multiple entity visions
- Understand how we make habitats resilient in the face of climate change

**Help managers understand:**

- Does what I'm doing today in management connect with how things are changing?
- Proactively frame energy development choices and impacts
- Impacts on aquatic resources and habitat
- Align management practices with emerging trends...be less reactive
- Not just Marcellus, biomass and wind too
- Opening forest areas to energy exploration...opens up to exotics and invasives

**Deliver some kind of landscape level, community mapping**



**Encourage greater statewide data alignment and sharing**

**Integrate with the field to try more ecosystem and habitat; less species focus on refuges**

**Keep the focus on the landscape: Avoid species-specific projects**

- Clarify this is where JVs and States focus

**Provide a picture of what changes to expect, what they'll look like for managers.**

- Which investments make sense? Which have a high probability of success?
- Does what I'm doing today connect with how things are changing?

**Focus on threats to high-quality habitat**

- Identify large-scale corridors for species migration

**Increase our influence with private individuals**

- Identify and encourage best land use practices for private landowners
- Landscape thinking is hard; most are focused on their back yards

**Provide guidance for greater consistency and needs for future plans**

**Be the forum where we determine how we're going to work together**

- Align multiple entity visions to maximize conservation focus

**Establish shared habitat classification systems for aquatic and terrestrial systems**

**Keep the focus on climate change. Agency is dwindling in some cases**

## ***What are the most important criteria that should guide prioritization of AppLCC 3-5 year work plan?***

- Is there immediacy of need?
- Is progress measurable?
- Are AppLCC partners willing to put skin in the game? (Time/Talent/Treasure/Influence)
- Can we have a measurable impact in 3-5 years...or sooner?
- Are results unique, something that couldn't be achieved individually?
- Does it leverage multiple sources of funding?
- Is the work large, and multi-state in impact?
- Does it provide INSIGHT conservation managers can use for practical decision making?
- Does the work benefit multiple groups and agencies?
- Is it proactive? Can it help avoid new ESA listings?
- Greatest benefit for the largest number of species/stakeholders
- Do impacts/assessments include a broad geographic scope?
- Does it support long-term monitoring or research?
- Are we balancing long-term and short-term needs?
- Does it duplicate successful work being done elsewhere?
- Was there transparency and openness in the selection and evaluation process?
- Does the work enhance effective partnerships?
- Does it help overcome existing barriers and roadblocks?
- Is the work innovative and ground-breaking in some way?
- Does it encourage willingness to experiment and learn?



- Does the project/need cross both terrestrial and aquatic resources? Is there a strong cross-connection?
- Does it leverage unique resources in LCC?

### ***How will your organization measure AppLCC success?***

- AppLCC helped us make more informed management decisions
- It enabled accomplishments we couldn't have delivered on our own
- We understand how our choices fit into the bigger management picture
- Work complimented/enhanced our monitoring and decision making
- Communication and information sharing among partners improved
- LCCs focused more on outcome measures; less on activity measures
- We accomplished outcome based activities
- Deliverables and timelines were stated up front for LCC projects
- Strong public support what we delivered was a beneficial and useful
- LCCs broke down turf barriers and promoted mutual benefits
- Insight from LCC data was linked to major resource improvements
  - i.e. Cleaner tributaries, stopped the loss of lands (or slowed)

### ***How can the AppLCC help you to meet your local goals, at the same time that your organization/agency is contributing to the large-landscape conservation goals of the AppLCC?***

#### **Support the continuation of State Wildlife Grants**

- LCCs work should influence future funding decisions

#### **Provide the forum for us to speak with**

#### **Address cross-border comparisons between SWPs**

- These aren't rolling up well even with Federal guidelines

#### **LCCs should be a lot of smart, technically-sound natural resource biologists.**

- They can design and develop proposals that would benefit the landscape and would benefit multi-state and Federal agencies.

### ***What barriers do you see to integrating people, data, and modeling approaches to answer questions & apply results at landscape scales?***

#### **Getting comfortable with landscape scope**

- A totally different way of thinking for many
- Collaboration inexperience: not that we don't want to do it...just that we haven't done it
- A wide range of collaborative interest among partners and agencies

#### **Struggles making decisions with uncertain and incomplete information**

#### **Incomplete knowledge of user perceptions and needs**





- Demonstrating success/value at the landscape scale to hunters and anglers at a scale they understand

**Each state has individual standardized databases**

- Legal barriers to data sharing and open records compliance
- At what level can we share data? Different states have different restrictions
- GIS personalities, preferences and vested interests

**Agencies that work on different project time frames**

- When these are complete and the funding dries up they go away
- A lack of a consistent system gets in our way. Habitat classification systems is our big example.
- Without it, it's hard to compare base communities. We need a more consistent framework for this

**Organizational culture**

- State parochialism: some institutional; some limited by small vision
- Sharing information about what State partners are doing
- State Wildlife resources are really tied up on game species.

**Sovereignty plays into the data sharing discussion**

- There may be certain culturally-sensitive information the tribe may not want to share with the public.

***How can the AppLCC facilitate data sharing among its co-operators in such a way that your ability to meet organizational goals would not be compromised, or might even be enhanced?***

**Establishing trust for the conversation is where this begins**

- We worry about a lot of things that are overstated: the last plant or potshard
- Set up a SharePoint for exchange these concerns?
- Be careful to give credit for data. Partners need to get appropriate credit for what they've contributed
- Credibility and impartiality of data is central...if users think data is tainted it gets ignored

**JVs have faced and dealt with many of these example. It will work, but it takes time and patience**

- NRCS addressed privacy act issues with data sharing data via farm bill practices
- JV success sharing data while preserving confidentiality of private landowners can be emulated
- Karst data mapping: Data indicated where karst features were important to consider in planning...not specific caves
- Explore and draft standard data sharing agreements for the protection of sensitive data
- GIS database assessments are particularly valuable: pictures help tell our message and show system connectedness

**We need leadership support for data sharing**

- Every entity has internal politics and culture. These are often more important to understand than science
- Many have worked hard for years; are highly protective
- Identify opportunities to get leadership more aware of the importance of connectivity



**LCCs should serve as a clearinghouse or data warehouse for partner data**

- Data is all over the place (resolvable in 3-5 years if we focus on data collection and how this is done)

**Use more open source data**

**Think through scaling disconnects carefully**

- We have to be working at the correct scale. Broader measures sometimes masks what's happening at very specific sites
- We can miss a lot if we aren't careful
- Broader scale leads to less confidence in modeling with some stakeholders

**Review NE regional classification systems for potential use in AppLCC**

- As a cross-border region there are some admin hurdles to looking at the acceptability of this here. LCC should tackle this issue

Rua's team has a vitality index that's soon to be released for county planners. They're seeking an even finer resolution.

***In what ways could the AppLCC help your organization to incorporate management responses to environmental change the effects of which might not be seen over typical planning horizons, but might instead occur over many decades or even centuries?***

Translate the science behind the predictive change/impacts in layman's terms.

- "I don't need somebody to tell me how to do it"
- "I need insight to make decisions what to do."

**Emphasize preparedness and resiliency. De-emphasize precise science**

- Avoid getting looped into specific predictive analysis
- It's naive of anyone to expect definitive answers for what changes are going to be taking place from the LCC.
- Frame the knowledge and trends of what we CAN say. Adapt as new information becomes available
- Even if the product isn't perfect, as long as we have a chance to refine/improve it we can learn and benefit
- If data isn't fine scale enough to work at the state level, we can through iterative examination figure out how to MAKE it usable.

**Be sensitive to coal's unique role in the region**

- Be open to modifying some of our approaches and messages
- Resiliency is something we can discuss with industry LCC can be lead these discussions
- Explore the overlapping values of healthy/productive ecosystems and streams

**Raise awareness you can't manage species state by state because species are going to be moving**

- This is one of the best ways of showing future impact...and motivating future behavior change
- This is a special area of research that requires a thorough understanding of what habitats we're



dealing with

**Downscaling models for climate change can be done**

- They are unlikely to be at sufficient scale for what people THINK they need.

**Starting point of mapping vegetation and stream communities is useful and needed**

**Climate Science Centers need to be closely linked and coordinated**

- With threats from climate change we expect to see shifts in species distribution, culturally-significant plants. We need to be engaged to have a voice in tool and planning development to address these new concerns

***In what ways might the AppLCC help you to conservation and/or manage ecosystem processes that transcend political/administrative boundaries?***

**Speak scenarios**

- People need a basic understanding of how species they care about may be suffering and vulnerable
- We need to be able to frame how these longer-scale changes will be unfolding
- Is our habitat unique or distributed across many states?
- Understanding how we fit in is vital

**We need substantive discussion to understand where various partners really stand**

- Some are eager to work across boundaries.
- Some are taking a “wait and see” approach
- Others are concerned about loss of turf and influence

**LCCs are going to have limited ability to change State perspectives right away**

- Agencies expect them to prove they are worth the investment of staff time.
- WIFFM? (What’s in it for me?) Messages are important

**Make LCC science findings understandable to a broader, non-scientific audience**

- The same things that benefit game species tend to benefit nongame species too
- Expand study sites across state borders and
- Facilitating communication between partners on what they're doing
- Expanding a study site area across states is one possibility

**Measure it: Be able to demonstrate and track restoration of ecosystem processes**

- We need the capacity to map and return the data back to us (especially for wide-ranging species)
- Let us know how we did

***What are acceptable products, services and data sets that would be useful to your decision makers in addressing the human use elements of planning around climate change?***

**Provide vulnerability assessments**



**Document and communicate the changes that are taking place**

- Summarize what's known in USEFUL MANAGEMENT BITES
- i.e. Species we'll be likely to see more of in the face of CC; those we're likely to see less of
- Focus on useful information people can use. Are big snakes in FL headed north as climate changes?
- Public support, interest and investment is needed to sustain LCC efforts
- If you have it: make sure people know about it and how to use it

**Talking in pictures will be necessary with managers and decision makers**

**Informing us what's going on in the LCC project area would help us make needed adjustments**

- "I really need to know what's going on in other states"
- Little or no information sharing between states for the habitat and species I manage
- LCCs could/should be filling this gap
- Assembling a common set of guidelines based on what other states are doing would be useful

**CC is too long-range, intangible for some agencies to have as a priority...yet**

- Many describe many other more immediate demands
- We don't have to mention climate specifically
- ...but we can focus on how things are changing and making better investments that align with the long view in mind

***What are the specific issues your organization faces with regard to addressing climate change?***

**Skepticism**

**Semantics**

- Some areas have to avoid use of CC at all
- Call it something else. Semantics are important
- Sensitivities how we address carbon footprint vs. jobs

**Our strategies in SWP don't change**

- CC will exacerbate existing challenges
- As it changes it will more drastically affect wildlife
- Change is inevitable
- Determine what we can do right now and choose wisely

***Are there constraints on your participation and/or funding?***

**Majority Opinion: Absolutely!**

**Minority: Not yet**

- It's more limited by the amount of time I spend on my "real job"
- Depends how the rest of my job plays out
- ...but I must communicate quickly what the results of MY participation have been in LCC
- Travel stipends have been HUGELY appreciated
- We need to be able to put our work in terms even a Congress can understand



## ***How does your organization view participation in the LCC as assisting with its mission?***

Maybe...best case: it's way too soon to tell

Some are doubtful or disconnected

- Been there before
- We're not investing fully until more is known and demonstrated

Some see no connection. Now or ever

## ***What kind of education/outreach programs could the LCC generate to improve understanding of the relative utility of such models, how they can be improved by field validation/local expert opinion, etc.?***

Establish what stakeholders/users want and if they're willing to commit resources to generate it

There is a big translation that **MUST** go back and forth between modelers and users

- Somewhere there has to be a link to those who understands how it will be applied and add value to what managers are doing

**ESSENTIAL** for LCCs to have upper management to be more focused on **BRIDGING** than on **SCIENCE**

- We need high skills in this bridging function to make modeling successful....otherwise we wind up with another science entity

**We need to focus on our managers to change some intensive management practices**

- Much of our parochialism is driven by demand for game species
- Can still provide better wildlife habitat that is a LOT more diverse than we're doing right now
- We need to be driving change, but unfortunately will have to wait for some attitude changes

**Help agencies position themselves to address climate change impacts**

- Enormous need to get folks up to speed on the aspects of CC
- Consider regional workshops to bring managers and decision makers together for these discussions
- Several states describe employees who lack information on this topic

**Focus on modeling that lends itself to site specific assessments that can be evaluated on the ground**

- If the modeling can be validated others in the field will find it advantageous to ground truth and improve
- Stream temperature indicators might be an example

**Testing/validation of what the model predicts, and how well it predicts it**

- This can inform where we want to emphasize (or de-emphasize) our efforts
- Models have absolutely got to be tested and refined with input from end-users





## ***How can we make our partnership process more productive for you, specifically: process improvements, meeting participation, on-going communications, and/or meeting design?***

### **Leverage more technology to link AppLCC partners**

- Videoconferencing/Webinars and Decision Support
- Engage larger groups in our conversation outside the meetings.

### **You can't get anything done without meetings**

- Run them run right, run effectively with agendas communicated in advance
- Use in-person meeting time for in-depth discussion; tough to do over the phone
- Be realistic with agendas: don't try to bite off too much
- It's helpful if we meet in conjunction with other events

### **Pay attention to maintaining momentum**

- We have so many demands on our time it's easy to get distracted
- Without being too demanding on people
- Science Needs assessment is critical. Needs to be clear and adjustable each year

### **LCC process to date is seen as a scramble by some**

- Too hard to react to some last-minute calls and meetings
- Many aren't practical for us to participate in. Some would like more predictability

### **Facilitate connecting the scientific activities partners are doing**

- Leverage opportunities to link and share what's going on and outcomes from scientific community
- Website is useful. Could be a location for this conversation to take place
- One click email update announcements work well for many

## ***What other issues/concerns might be useful to discuss?***

### **Where we are is a function of our newness**

- For where we are in this process we should expect a few stumbles or a little disorganized
- Coalescing toward a focused purpose will take some time and hard work

### **We will be successful if we avoid thinking of ourselves as science providers**

- If we don't have a vision or can help tell SHs what to do with it we'll miss a huge opportunity

### **More leadership is needed**

- Federal agencies haven't taken the time to think about their roles in LCCs
- Secretary to Secretary communication/support between agencies is needed
- Agency people question how strongly they are supported

### **Prioritizing science needs or themes last November resulted in being too inclusive**

- No filtered, prioritized focus within the region defers the hard questions until later

### **Be mindful of cultural perspectives**

- Hunting and fishing public needs to be actively engaged on the resources they believe are important and want to preserve. They have and will continue to pay fees to participate



**APPLCC's value is greater than the science if we can be seen as an INFLUENCER**

- We need to monitor public expectations and attitudes
- Don't get ahead of what they are willing and able to support
- We can make a difference with the help of the states and general public support

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