

Appalachian Landscape Conservation Cooperative

Governance Structure and Charter

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1. Introduction – Landscape Conservation Approach

Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) are applied science and management partnerships initiated by the Department of the Interior's (DOI's) bureaus and others involved in natural and cultural resource conservation and management. Secretarial Order No. 3289, issued on September 14, 2009 by DOI Secretary Ken Salazar, calls for the establishment of a seamless nationwide network to better integrate science and management to address the impacts of landscape-level stressors and drivers of change, including the changing climate, on America's land, water, and other natural and cultural resources. Definition of this network was based on a 2009 joint U.S. Fish and Wildlife (USFWS) and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) team formulation of a geographic framework that appropriately aggregated Bird Conservation Regions for landscape-scale biological planning and conservation design for both terrestrial and aquatic species. The resulting National Geographic Framework identified large regions that crossed state and federal administrative boundaries. There are currently twenty-two LCCs that make up the National LCC Network. The geographic boundary of the Appalachian LCC spans a total of 15 states (see figure 1), from southern New York along the Hudson River down along the Appalachian Mountains to the northern forested areas of Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina. The Appalachian LCC extends westward to the central hardwoods of Tennessee, Kentucky and parts of Indiana and Illinois, including the two major river drainage basins that flow into the Ohio River Basin. The Appalachian LCC is administered through the USFWS Region 5 Office.

2. Appalachian LCC Vision and Mission

The landscape of the Appalachian LCC is in an era of monumental conservation challenges. These include: wholesale loss, fragmentation and degradation of natural habitats; decline and loss of species and the services they provide and genetic isolation of remaining populations; increasing threats associated with wildfire and change in natural disturbance regimes; dramatic changes in the hydrologic

cycle with an increased risk of flooding as well as water scarcity, decrease in water quality and availability, and changes in water temperature; expansion of harmful invasive species and range expansion of disease vectors, pathogens and pests. Many threats will be exacerbated by the effects of expanding and emerging land-use changes and changing climate. It is imperative that natural and cultural resource management agencies, science providers including research agencies and academic institutions, conservation organizations and other industries and communities work together to understand the impacts of these stressors and determine how best to address these challenges within the Appalachian region.

The mountain region and drainage system along the Central and Southern Appalachians represents the richest of temperate areas in North America in terms of its biodiversity which evolved due to the Appalachian region's diverse topography with long broad ridges, steep slopes, deep gorges and wide intermountain valleys and geologic stability over long evolutionary time-scale periods. This unique combination of physical characteristics and history has resulted in a broad range of microhabitats and the presence of numerous species and communities that at one time existed in abundance but now only survive in particular places in the region. Numerous invertebrates, salamanders, crayfish, freshwater mussels and fish are restricted to single watersheds or peaks due to millions of years of isolation and favorable conditions. The Southern Appalachians are a global hotspot for aquatic species diversity in part because streams and rivers drain toward the south, allowing aquatic species to persist during successive glaciations. As an example of this species richness, Tennessee alone supports 290 known fish species which is more than all of Europe. The Appalachian Mountains are also among the richest of temperate areas from a floristic standpoint, with more than 6,300 known species of plants from the region.

Human communities across the region are heavily reliant on nature-based industries, historic traditions of sport hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation, logging and agriculture. The mountains in the region play a critical role safeguarding and buffering the headwaters of key watersheds that serve the heavily populated regions of the North Atlantic, South Atlantic, Great Lakes, and even flows into the Mississippi River drainage. Major threats to the biological diversity, as well as the environmental services and benefits to society they provide, include the complete loss, fragmentation or disturbance to terrestrial and aquatic systems due to expanding energy development, urban and suburban expansion with its attendant pollution and roadways, and changes to the hydrologic cycle due to extreme levels of water consumption, withdrawal and increased variability in the climate system.

Appalachian LCC Vision: Ecological Integrity. Environmental Benefits. Sustainable Wildlife Populations.

The Appalachian LCC is a science and management partnership to protect the valued resources and biological diversity of the Appalachian region, sustain the benefits provided by healthy and resilient ecosystems to human communities and help natural systems adapt to large landscape-level stressors and those stressors that may be magnified by the changing climate.

Appalachian LCC Mission: *Achieve sustainable landscape-level conservation in the Appalachian region through partnerships, shared resources, enhanced science-based management capacity, landscape-level planning and support for conservation actions and research as part of a national network.*

3. Cooperative Structure

The organizational structure of the Appalachian LCC governance consists of three levels: (1) Steering Committee (SC) level which is the decision-making and oversight body with the Executive Committee as a sub-set drawn from, and voted into membership by, the full SC; (2) Staff and team level (includes core LCC staff (hired) or partner staff assigned to support the Appalachian LCC, or other leading experts to serve as part of a technical advisory team in support of the work of the Appalachian LCC); and (3) Group level (“work” or “advisory” groups established to address specific topics or issues, often drawn from the partnership-at-large (i.e., the partner organizations represented on the SC).

4. Governance Structure and Charter

This Charter authorizes the SC to provide operational oversight to make programmatic, policy and funding decisions on behalf of the Appalachian LCC. Any subsequent review and revision of the Charter shall be conducted as necessary but changes will require a vote and approval under the terms and provisions governing “Decision Making” (*see Steering Committee-Full Membership section below*) before such change(s) may come into effect.

5. Steering Committee - Leadership

Leadership: Close-oversight and staff direction are provided by the senior leadership and the Executive Committee. There are two senior leadership positions recognized within the Appalachian LCC: Chair and Vice-Chair. The Executive Committee is an elected subset of the SC members established to address time-sensitive decisions (e.g., those that cannot wait for regularly scheduled meetings, decisions related to the day-to-day operations and financial operations of the Appalachian LCC). The Executive Committee also serves as the standing Financial and Nominating Committees. Both the Chair and Vice-Chair serve on the Executive Committee.

Candidates for all leadership positions will be selected from a list drawn from and voted upon by the SC, based on a review of the candidates’ biographic information (as provided to Appalachian LCC staff) and capacity to participate. Members will be encouraged to consider the intent and broader focus of the Appalachian LCC in selecting membership which seeks to promote representation across different sectors, organizations and geographic regions. The Executive Committee certifies the list of candidates and presents it for a general election vote by the full SC. Nominations for the Chair and Vice-Chair do not preclude the nomination or appointment of an individual of the same organizational-type, only that

the diversity be represented in the nomination list. If the Executive Committee is not able to certify the nomination list, the SC may vote to waive this requirement, not fill the position(s), or allow the sponsoring agency (USFWS Region 5) to appoint candidates from the active membership to serve in the vacant position(s).

Roles and Responsibilities:

(Executive Committee and Decision-Making): The Executive Committee serves as an integral part of the Appalachian LCC Leadership and allows the Chair to convene in-person or remotely to discuss and render a decision quickly in lieu of convening the larger SC. It will consist of no more than 6 members, including the Chair and Vice-Chair. The Chair, or in the Chair's absence the Vice-Chair, presides over and guides Executive Committee meetings and consultations. In its role as Financial Committee, the Executive Committee shall be responsible for engaging all major funding agencies or partners. A Treasurer is not required as funds are administered by the sponsoring agency (USFWS). In its role as Nominating Committee, the Executive Committee must certify the nomination lists from the serving members of the SC for all elected positions (i.e., senior leadership and Executive Committee).

(Decision-Making): The Chair is a non-voting member of the Executive Committee except in cases needed to break a tie or in the case of a member's emergency absence or recusal. All other Executive Committee members are voting members, and decisions are made by simple majority of those participating in the consultation which requires a quorum before a vote can be taken. For purposes of Appalachian LCC business requiring an Executive Committee vote, a "quorum" means all but one member, either principals or designated alternates are represented in-person or are participating live via remote technology, at the time the vote is taken. If a member cannot participate in the meeting, an alternate may serve or the principal may submit a proxy vote if the member and the Chair have discussed the issue prior to the vote. Proxy votes must be received in writing by the Chair and Appalachian LCC Coordinator no less than 24 hours before the vote is taken.

(Chair and Vice-Chair): The Chair or the Vice-Chair if so designated by the Chair or in his/her absence shall: (1) run the meeting of the Appalachian LCC; (2) convene and preside over all official SC or Executive Committee (*see below*) meetings and conference calls of the Appalachian LCC; (3) help run the business of the Appalachian LCC by providing direction to the LCC Coordinator; (4) serve as the ambassador and advocate for the LCC in appropriate venue; (5) provide formal invitations to others requesting their service on the SC (*see Criteria for Membership below*); (6) help to forge and realign the commitment and strategic program integration across the membership and within all other LCC-related efforts.

(Terms) All elected leadership positions serve for no more than two consecutive years. If the Chair must step down before this period, the Vice-Chair will be considered Chair-Elect and serve in this role for the remainder of the Chair's term. If the Vice-Chair position becomes open as the Vice-Chair assumes the role as Chair, or both posts are open, the vacated positions will be appointed following the process of

nomination among SC members and voting by the simple majority vote if a quorum is represented. The Executive Committee may call an emergency meeting to elect a temporary Chair, if both positions are open and a delay is anticipated before a vote of the full SC can take place. Should a member step down from the Executive Committee, the Chair will appoint a replacement to serve out the remainder of the term.

6. Steering Committee – Full Membership

Roles and Responsibilities: The SC provides oversight of the Appalachian LCC and is responsible for providing: policy guidance; approving budgets that come out of the Executive Committee; allocating resources and funds; approving research or other activity proposals. The SC may instruct the Appalachian LCC Coordinator to establish and coordinate technical “Advisory” or “Work” Groups and provide guidance on their composition, representation and scope of work.

(Decision-making): For purposes of Appalachian LCC business requiring full SC membership, a “quorum” means at least 50 percent of the members in attendance, either principals or designated alternates, are in attendance at the time the vote is taken. A member is considered to be “in attendance” if they participate in-person or via remote technology. If a quorum is present, decisions require a simple majority vote. Each participating organization, association or individual officially serving on the SC designates one primary and one alternate representative by name authorized to vote on behalf of the entity represented. Any substitutions require an official written notice that must be received by the Chair and LCC Coordinator prior to the day of the vote. An alternate may request a short suspension of the voting process in order to confer with their principal prior to voting and it is the Chair’s prerogative to grant such requests and to determine the allowable time. The principal may submit a proxy vote that can be included in the voting tally but does not contribute to meeting the requirement of a quorum. This must be submitted to the Chair and LCC Coordinator in written or electronic form, no less than 48 hours before the vote is called. For issues directly affecting the programs or prerogatives of one or more entities not present at the time of the vote, proxy votes of affirmation or objection shall be obtained from each such entity prior to the proposal being placed into effect. The votes of representatives of organizations, associations or individuals that will directly benefit financially, as the principal beneficiary, from the outcome of a vote by the deciding body will not be counted if the individual has not already recused themselves from the vote.

Membership: As guided by the DOI LCC-Initiative Secretarial Order No. 3289 the SC will seek to include representation from Federal, State, Tribal, non-governmental organizations and other organizations, associations or industries that influence land-use at a landscape scale and influence landscape conservation of natural systems and valued resources. The initial members invited to serve on the SC represent senior conservation leaders and administrators within their own organizations that represent a broad perspective of interests relevant to fulfilling the landscape-level conservation concept and balanced sustainability goals. Organizations represented on the SC control or influence land-use and

resource management decisions, or can offer resources and skills to enhance the work of the Appalachian LCC membership to support the planning and delivery of sustainable conservation efforts.

(Representation) The Appalachian LCC covers a large geographic extent with many agencies or organizations operating across multiple states, regions or area offices. States may also have more than one resource management agency or commission willing to serve on the SC. In accepting the invitation to serve on the SC, the multiple representatives of single state agencies, organizations or administrative units agree to coordinate across the multiple units in the making of decisions requiring a vote or commitment of resources. A designated representative authorized to vote on behalf of the others will be identified and must notify the Appalachian LCC staff and the Chair, in writing, no less than 48 hours before a vote is called. Regardless of the number of administrative units or state-authorities represented, each agency or state is only allowed one vote.

Size and Adding Members: There is currently no limit imposed on the size of the SC and membership remains open. State fish and wildlife agency representatives serving on the SC will serve as their state point-of-contact and may choose to nominate other agency representatives operating within the state that influence large areas or resources. Additions to the SC may be initiated by two methods: nominations generated from the current membership, Appalachian LCC staff, and representatives of other existing conservation partnerships, such as the bird joint ventures, fish habitat partnerships, and professional research and conservation organizations, working across the Appalachian region. The second method is through a submission of a statement of interest and application (see *“Other State Agencies, Non-Governmental and Other Organizations, Partnerships, Associations or Industry, and University Associates”* below). Nomination generated from within the SC must be received in writing and sent to the Chair and Appalachian LCC Coordinator. The Chair will submit nominations for review and consideration by the Full Membership at the next SC meeting.

Term and Representation: The development of the Appalachian LCC will rely heavily upon the commitment of service among the SC members. Their guidance, leadership, and continuity of participation will be critical during the early years to build a successful Cooperative. Thus, membership on the SC requires active participation. Participation may include attending meetings and phone conferences in person or via remote technology. Failure to participate in three consecutive meetings signifies an inability or unwillingness to fulfill the commitment to serve. In that event, the Chair, in consultation with the Vice-Chair and Executive Committee, may send a letter to the organizational member or its leadership. The letter should outline the Roles and Responsibilities of SC members and verify that the appropriate individual has been identified to serve as the organizational representative or to ask that a new representative be selected to replace the individual. Membership on the SC is not subject to any term limits.

(Federal) Federal representatives will hold a permanent seat on the SC, but the representative may rotate among people within the organizational agency¹. Members may be reappointed at the agencies' discretion. Given the extensive geographic expanse of the Appalachian LCC which crosses multiple jurisdictional boundaries as defined by many federal agencies, an agency may offer more than one representative from the same federal agency if the regional boundary and authority of the federal agency represent significant geographic areas. Only one representative from each federal agency will be a voting member of the SC, and each agency will make its own decision on how to select the voting member and coordinate across their jurisdictional areas. The one designated voting agency representative will be identified and serve in that role indefinitely until the agency notifies the Chair and Appalachian LCC Coordinator in writing.

(States) State fish and wildlife agency representatives serving on the SC will be appointed by the individual state's agency or agencies. The state agency may at any time choose to select a new representative for their seat on the SC, or may at their discretion continue with the current representative. States may choose to have more than one representative if they want to expand the representation based on issues of taxonomic, or terrestrial versus aquatic focus, or area of natural lands under their control. However, in cases in which multiple representatives from the same state, or from the same state agency are represented on the SC, only one representative for that state may vote on issues before the SC. It is incumbent on the multiple representatives from the same state to coordinate on any vote or decision before the SC. In cases where there are multiple representatives from the same state, the designated voting member will be identified in writing to the Chair and Appalachian LCC Coordinator no less than 48 hours before any scheduled vote. In the event that the state fish and wildlife agency does not participate on the SC, the Chair and Appalachian LCC Coordinator will seek to identify a partner from other state agencies or major conservation partnership operating across the Appalachian LCC state area overlap to serve on the SC.

(Tribal) Native American Tribes that manage lands within the Appalachian LCC will select their Tribal representatives among their tribal nation-recognized bands. The individual Tribe may at any time choose to select a new representative for their seat on the SC, or the Tribe may at their discretion continue with the current representative. Each tribal nation is granted one vote.

(Other State Agencies, Non-Governmental and Other Organizations, Partnerships, Industry Associations, and University Associates) Inclusion of an organization or representative from an organization or group of the SC will be made on a case-by-case basis to help the Appalachian LCC meet its mission and goals (*see "Size and Adding Members" above*). Industry Associations or organizations not currently represented on the SC may submit a letter of interest to the Chair

¹ For the purpose of this document the term "agency" reflects the Federal OMB codes. Within the Department of Interior several separate agencies are recognized: OSMRE, USGS, USFWS, NPS, etc. The Environmental Protection Agency, Corp of Engineers, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and Forest Service are each considered as individual agencies.

for review and consideration at the next SC meeting. Members already represented on the SC may be reappointed at the organization's discretion. Organizations that have multiple state-level offices may request to have more than one representative on the SC. However, in cases in which multiple representatives serve on the SC, only one representative may vote on issues before the SC. It is incumbent on the multiple representatives from the same organization to coordinate on any vote or decision before the SC. The voting member will be identified in writing to the Chair and Appalachian LCC Coordinator no less than 48 hours before any scheduled vote.

(Exception to the One Vote Rule) The one vote rule for multiple representatives of the same agency, state or organization allows for an exception in which an *ad hoc* decision arises before the SC that was not previously announced or anticipated prior to the meeting. If the representatives feel a consultation among the various state or regional authority is required, the Chair or in the Chair's absence the Vice-Chair, may temporarily suspend the voting as appropriate to allow representatives to contact the relevant principals before proceeding with a final vote. It is anticipated that voting will resume before the end of a scheduled meeting period; however, it remains within the authority of the Chair to determine the appropriate length of time to suspend voting, given the need for timely decision-making in conducting the business of the Appalachian LCC.

Meeting Requirements: The SC will have a minimum of two meetings per year (i.e., one in-person meeting and one conference call at the mid-term of that year). Additional meetings may be called as the need arises to effectively conduct the business of the Appalachian LCC and to facilitate planning and decision-making. All in-person meetings will offer a live-conference call for participation of those members unable to attend the in-person meeting, if feasible. Participation in-person or via live-remote will constitute a member's active engagement and service on the SC. The Appalachian LCC may consider providing money for invitational travel assistance from administrative funds for members or technical experts unable to travel; however, all travel assistance requests must be approved by the Chair and Executive Committee, serving in the role of Finance Committee.

7. LCC Core Staff and LCC Coordinating Team

Core Staff: The near-term staffing of the Appalachian LCC includes the Appalachian LCC Coordinator and Science Coordinator.

(Coordinator) The Appalachian LCC Coordinator reports to the Chair, Vice-Chair, SC and Executive Committee; however, the Appalachian LCC Coordinator is a non-voting member on these decision-making bodies. The Appalachian LCC Science Coordinator and support staff report to the LCC Coordinator. The Appalachian LCC Coordinator will perform the following duties: track budget expenditures; supervise staff; represent the Appalachian LCC in various technical and outreach meetings; report Appalachian LCC accomplishments; support the SC,

Executive Committee, Integrated Planning Team and all technical Advisory or Work Groups; maintain close communication and strong working relationships with the committees and provide a vital coordination role between the various teams and groups and the SC; coordinate with representatives from other LCCs across the National LCC Network and DOI Climate Science Centers staff and partners; serve as the “primary contact” for submission of all draft Appalachian LCC policies, research support requests and other documents or proposals formally submitted on behalf of the Appalachian LCC; conduct other duties as appropriate and in support of the Appalachian LCC.

(Science Coordinator) The Science Coordinator reports to and consults with the Appalachian LCC Coordinator in developing general program objectives, strategies and evaluation of scientific information, research needs and assessments of the landscape conservation work of the Appalachian LCC.

(Coordinating Team) The Appalachian LCC Coordinating Team includes the core staff and other positions, representing staff to be filled through hiring, contract or temporary assignment from partner organizations. Staff support and expertise to serve as part of the Appalachian LCC Coordinating Team in the near-term include: (1) Communications Specialist; (2) Data, Information and Monitoring Manager; (3) GIS Specialist; (4) Administrative Assistant. The role of the Coordinating Team is to facilitate meetings and consultations with technical work groups and advisory groups under the direction of the Appalachian LCC Coordinator or Science Coordinator. The term “Appalachian LCC Coordinating Team” is used to reflect a coordinating body composed of both core Appalachian LCC staff and others drawn from the partners-at-large (i.e., organizational representative on the SC) based on their technical expertise to assist in addressing the needs of the Appalachian LCC and to assemble a team with broad expertise to fulfill priority science needs and conservation objectives.

8. Work Groups and Advisory Teams

The Appalachian LCC will rely on two different types of consultative units for the purpose of making recommendations that help inform decision-making of the SC (i.e., Work Groups and technical Advisory Teams). Designation as a “team” versus “work group” reflects the differences of whether the staff or the SC defines the composition and membership of the units, and defines their scope of work and length of services. Both teams and work groups provide critical and in-depth review and consultation on technical issues.

(Work Groups) Work Groups are formed at the direction of the SC to address discreetly defined tasks or service to fill the Appalachian LCC needs. The SC will review and approve the scope of work, composition of the work group and duration of service before such work groups are formed. Work Group meetings may be held in-person, via conference call, video conference or electronically and will be facilitated by the Work Group Chair or by a SC member serving as

Work Group Chair. The Work Group Chair will be the primary point of contact for the Appalachian LCC Coordinator or Science Coordinator and will report to the SC or Executive Committee as appropriate.

(Advisory Teams) Advisory Teams are formed at the direction and discretion of the Appalachian LCC staff, and membership is based upon technical or subject matter expertise. These technical Advisory Teams are assembled to capture field- or research-level conservation community observations to assist the Appalachian LCC staff in formulating recommendations for research and planning needs that will be forwarded to the Integrated Planning Team (*see below*). These Advisory Teams represent both scientists and management experts from the conservation community. Three areas of Advisory Teams are anticipated: (1) taxonomic or system-focused teams; (2) integrated planning team; and (3) communications team. Membership on the teams will be filled through voluntary participation or temporary assignment from partner organizations. Meetings may be held in-person, via conference call, video conference or electronically and will be facilitated by an Advisory Team Chair or “thought leader” that has volunteered to serve or as nominated by the team.

(Integrated Planning Team) The Integrated Planning Team serves as a collaborative advisory body for SC to consider planning and coordination needs, opportunities and recommendations. Integrated Planning Team members are identified by and invited to serve by the Appalachian LCC Coordinator based on their proven expertise and ability to plan at the landscape-level and to incorporate diverse areas of scientific information and formulate synthetic analyses to help plan landscape-level activities and research programs. Recommendations for membership on the Integrated Planning Team will be solicited from the SC, the partners-at-large and the broader research and conservation communities. A member of an Advisory Team may also serve on the Integrated Planning Team.

(Communications Team) The Communications Team is a specialized Appalachian LCC Coordination Team composed of both core staff and expertise offered to the Appalachian LCC by partner organizations. Until such time as a Communications Specialist is hired or the services are contracted out or provided by staff serving on detail, the coordination of this Team will be shared as far as practical with the Appalachian LCC Coordinator and the Communications staff within USFWS. The Communications Team makes recommendations to the SC regarding outreach, communication and networking needs; opportunities and prioritization for joint communication actions among member organizations or operating units; collaboration with neighboring LCCs and the National DOI-LCC communications network.

Chronology

- *Review draft submitted to the ISC (July 15-Aug 15, 2011).*
- *ISC meeting; Chair calls for a review and vote for approval of final draft (Sept. 2, 2011).*
- *Open review and electronic voting period (Sept. 15-29, 2011).*
- *Results of vote for acceptance and adoption as of Sept. 30, 2011.*

Presented for review, adoption and approval

- April 24th 2013 – submitted to the Interim Steering Committee
- Approved as Permanent Charter on April 24th, 2013

Figure 1

