Connecticut River Watershed Conservation Design Pilot Project - Aquatic Sub-team

Summary of meeting on April 22, 2014. USFWS Fisheries conference room and conference call

Attending: David Perkins (Co-chair – USFWS), John Warner (Co-chair – USFWS),Rachel Cliché (USFWS), Katie Kennedy (TNC), Andrew MacLachlan (USFWS), Andrew Milliken (USFWS), Nancy McGarigal (USFWS), Pete Murdoch (USGS), Dave Stier (Springfield Science Museum), Ken Sprankle (USFWS), Tim Wildman (CTDEEP)

Two possible objectives proposed at the start of the meeting:

1) Identify and describe the most valuable aquatic areas, including connections between them

2) Consider species and habitat characteristics important to identify most valuable areas

There was discussion of how to select priority areas or species. One suggestion on was to put a general priority on unimpounded/ free-flowing stream reaches. Most of the discussions focused on the data, tools and techniques available to identify the important areas. Examples include trying to identify the means to measure and protect the quantity and quality of water at these most important aquatic areas, or the way to sift through the hundreds of culvert sites to prioritize areas for work.

The question of scale was raised as a factor that impacts decisions on the species and landscape features that are most important – For example, riparian buffers have greater influence on the adjacent small coldwater streams and trout than on American shad in the main stem.

Several suggestions focused on looking at representative species as a way to focus species and ecological condition objectives set by the group. For example the habitat criteria important to the short-nosed sturgeon could be a way to protect this species and identify important main-stem conditions for general conservation.

Generally the group came to believe that process questions would be easier to address once aquatic system objectives were set.

Team agreed to review the published USFWS/NALCC representative aquatic species list as a starting point.

Responding to a UMass request, decided to start sorting aquatic systems based on the TNC scheme of headwater/small/medium/large rivers, as opposed to the stream order scheme.

A new member has been added to the team: Anne Kuhn from EPA, Narragansett lab.