Albany, New York
June 14-16, 2011

**Northeast Regional Conservation Framework**
**Workshop (Albany II)**

Summary Report

*August 5, 2011*

*DRAFT*

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Appendices (and full report) are available for download at:
http://www.northatlanticlcc.org/rcn_summary.html

**Northeast Regional Conservation
Framework Workshop (Albany II)**

# Executive Summary

The Northeast Regional Conservation Framework Workshop ("Albany II") was held in Albany, New York on June 14-16, 2011 with eighty-six (86) participants, representing a cross-section of 13 state agencies, six federal agencies and 12 nongovernmental organizations or universities. The workshop was convened and sponsored jointly by the Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (NEAFWA) and the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) in the Northeast Region. The specific objectives of the workshop were to:

- Review, synthesize, evaluate, and present Regional Conservation Needs (RCN) and initial LCC projects completed or underway;
- Increase understanding and engagement by state and other conservation partners in RCN and LCC projects and goals in the Northeast;
- Review progress made toward original goals for the RCN program;
- Discuss challenges, needs, and opportunities for the RCN program and LCCs in the Northeast;
- Explore and discuss opportunities for collaborations between RCNs and LCCs in the Northeast to address common needs; and
- Develop initial consensus on a common conservation framework, vision, and highest priorities going forward.

Elements of a proposed regional conservation framework, presented at the beginning of the workshop, formed the foundation of the discussions. The framework was based on RCN priority topic areas and the elements of Strategic Habitat Conservation, and included the following components:

Priorities
Biological Assessment
Goal-Setting
Conservation Design
Science Translation Tools
Conservation Adoption
Conservation Delivery
Monitoring, Evaluation and Research
Information Management

There was consensus among participants on the need for a framework and general agreement on the framework components for organizing and prioritizing needs and projects. Discussion on the framework focused on the need to address habitat and ecosystem approaches; to specify the role of public

engagement in partnering with agencies to determine goals and deliver conservation; and additional tasks that need to be incorporated into the framework.

Workshop sessions corresponding to framework elements, or groupings thereof, included information describing each framework element along with a synthesis of RCN, LCC, Competitive State Wildlife Grant and other projects conducted from 2007 to 2010 that corresponded to that element, and a summary of relevant pre-workshop assessment results.  Small breakout group and full group discussions and voting were used to identify and rank priority additional needs under each element or element group.  A total of 94 conservation needs were identified through five sessions including: 20 for Habitat Mapping, 17 for Biological Assessment and Goal-Setting, 18 for Conservation Design to Delivery, 19 for Monitoring and Research and 20 for Information Management. The 32 highest ranked projects across all sessions were then grouped and re-voted to determine the highest overall near-term priorities.  The highest-ranked projects are listed below, organized by framework element.

Communications and Outreach: *(note: this category does not appear in the Framework diagram but supports multiple elements)*
- Communications, tool kit, users guide
- Deliver the results (synthesis) of the projects (products) in a meaningful way to on-the-ground managers at state/local levels and provide commitment of resources to accomplish (people and funds).  Start with RCN Conservation Status Report.
- Take existing RCN products and fund a communication specialist to repackage and deliver information to pre-defined user groups (i.e., public, resource managers, and stakeholders) with associated effectiveness measures.
- An information delivery mechanism should be a requirement of every future RCN product to deliver information to pre-defined user groups (i.e., public, resource managers, stakeholders) with associated effectiveness measures.
- Immediate need for reporting on success of SWG grant-funded work.  (PA example - 10 fish species taken off state list)  Need to package our project information as success stories that general public/legislators can read and understand.
- Specific performance criteria and reporting must be a required part of all RCN projects -- best if they are standardized.
- Easy access to information for policy makers in Congress - outreach and advocacy for that audience, e.g. Value of basic monitoring data is not always known until there is a problem - translation of value of basic science for lay audience.

Habitat Mapping: *(note: Mapping also does not appear in the Framework diagram but supports multiple elements)*
- Finish mapping all systems (Canada, lakes)
- Usable product (expectations, limits)
- Mapping, accuracy and validation
- Layers (land use, threats, refugia, invasive species)

Biological Assessment:
- In the new SWAPs recommend adopting a consistent format/template which will allow for a region wide roll up (including population targets) for establishing goals, perhaps a consistent summary or appendix.
- Create distribution maps for regional responsibility/high concern species - overlay on NE habitat maps.
- Development of habitat focus areas and corridors.
- Develop a process to develop regional representative species goals (numbers and distribution) to allow development of landscape-scale habitat design and conservation.
- In the new SWAPs recommend adopting a consistent format/template which will allow for a region wide roll up (including population targets) for establishing goals, perhaps a consistent summary or appendix.

Conservation Design and Delivery
- Working with implementers/users, translate the information into usable tools in order to convince them that it's useful to them and what they are doing (cottontail as a model.) Always have specific implementation examples using the results of these projects for both buy-in and delivery. Develop a marketing, training, and capacity building strategy targeted to specific needs.
- Provide information on landscapes of regional significance to conservation partners, big (e.g. NRCS) and small (e.g. local land trusts) to implement specific conservation actions.
- Identification of habitat focus areas with a step up step down (Regional to local) process to implement on the ground habitat conservation, restoration, and management.
- Overlay and integrate existing datasets to delineate landscapes of regional significance (focal areas and connectivity).
- Develop conservation designs for multiple representative species, with consideration that actions will happen by private landowners and with consideration of a changing climate and other threats and translated into a format for those who do conservation on the ground can understand and implement.
- Provide cookbook or catalog of on-the-ground implementation details that translate conservation design results into practical actions or projects. The regional-scale focal areas are a logical starting point for this.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Research
- Long term monitoring and performance evaluation to feed into the conservation framework. Fund the implementation of the NE Regional Monitoring and Performance Reporting Framework.
- Identify and leverage existing federal monitoring programs and develop state/tribal/NGO surveys to complement the federal surveys to provide regional status.
- Establish Uniform Monitoring Practices that can be applied across large geographic areas for multi-jurisdictional resources (e.g., habitats for species that occur across geopolitical boundaries). These need to be relevant and applicable to inform current management decision-making. Need a consistent framework for states to implement monitoring so that we can roll up data.
- Ensure accurate monitoring of representative species to support biological assessment and conservation design.

Information Management
- Support and engage in the forthcoming regional information management needs assessment that was identified as a top priority LCC science need. Engage all the conservation community in this process, with the goal of making better decisions.
- Develop a way for states, LCCs and other partners to immediately access the habitat mapping and geospatial condition analysis products coming out of the RCN process.
- Support development of SWAP database to promote consistency in next generation of SWAPs, allow easy State rollup, guide revisions and improve accessibility.
- Regional habitat management database that includes spatial and tabular data on habitats being managed on both public and private lands, type of management, target species; consider pilot on one type of habitat.
- Institutionalize long term datasets on a Regional cooperative basis (security, access, data sharing, maintenance, transferable data technology).
- Create data sharing agreements between all members of NE conservation community - state, federal, NGO - and get their data.

Several overarching themes emerged from these priorities and came up repeatedly during discussions at the workshop included those summarized below.

**Immediate focus on communications, dissemination and adoption:** There was consensus on an immediate need to better communicate regional projects and disseminate the results in a way that is meaningful and targeted to 1) on-the-ground managers at state/local levels, and 2) the broad conservation community, and 3) the general public and legislators. The highest immediate need was reporting on the success of SWG grant-funded work to legislators. Person-to-person transmission of information via dedicated technical assistance staff was identified as the preferred mode for managers, but tool kits, user guides, and other complementary media were also identified.

**Develop an effective information management system**:  A set of immediate needs were identified related to the development of an information management system that will provide easy access for states, LCCs and other partners to conservation information and tools produced by or compiled in support of regional projects. This enhanced access needs to include training and sustained technical assistance on decision support tools.  An important first step is to support and engage in the forthcoming regional information needs assessment that was identified as a top priority LCC science need, and engage the broad conservation community in this process, with the goal of providing information to guide decision-making.  Several specific information needs were identified including enhanced access to large spatial datasets (maps); a State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) database to promote consistency in the next generation of SWAPs, allow easy State rollup, guide revisions and improve accessibility; and implementation of the Northeast Regional Monitoring and Performance Reporting Framework.

**Expedite delivery of the right actions in the right places**:  There was a set of immediate needs identified related to finishing and validating mapping of species and habitats and identifying conservation focus areas based on a variety of approaches.  A synthesis of existing focus areas was identified as an important first step.  In addition, integration of ongoing approaches to developing landscape designs and delineating focus areas including species-habitat modeling approaches using representative species and the Northeast regional habitat maps, geospatial condition analysis of habitats, and connectivity were identified as important.  An identified priority need was for tools to be translated into media and formats that are designed to expedite the delivery of specific conservation applications and for specific implementation examples using the results of regional projects for both buy-in and delivery. In order to ensure delivery of the right actions in the right places, marketing, training, and capacity building strategies are needed.

Immediate follow-ups to the workshop include the use of the results by the NEAFWA Fish and Wildlife Diversity Technical Committee to prioritize needs for FY 2012 RCN funding opportunity and use of the results by the North Atlantic LCC to develop a science strategic plan and to select projects for funding.  Workshop attendees and other partners will be invited to be actively engaged in ongoing projects.  Additional synthesis of the table discussions, group discussions and rankings will be conducted after the workshop by the planning team and other interested partners to identify next steps and roles.

# Northeast Regional Conservation
# Framework Workshop (Albany II)

# Summary Report

Workshop Context and Purpose

The Northeast Regional Conservation Framework Workshop (Albany II) was a forum to bring together conservation leaders from the Northeast region to review progress, celebrate successes and identify the challenges of fish and wildlife conservation in the recent past including the Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Regional Conservation Needs (RCN) program, and to help chart a path forward for regional conservation. The workshop served as a five-year follow-up to the *State Wildlife Action Plans Meeting* ("Albany I") meeting, as well as an opportunity to increase collaboration with the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) in the northeast. The workshop was organized around a regional conservation framework to help guide and organize conservation activities and needs in the Northeast region, and provide a means for identifying common needs and coordinating efforts among partners.

**Background**

In March of 2006, conservation leaders from the Northeast states and partners came together to share ideas in Albany, New York at the *State Wildlife Action Plans Meeting* ("Albany I"). This meeting enabled conservation practitioners to discuss pressing regional conservation challenges and to identify and prioritize needs that required coordinated action on a regional scale. The Albany I meeting ultimately was a catalyst for establishing the Regional Conservation Needs (RCN) program. This innovative program (www.rcngrants.org) is supported by a 4% contribution of State Wildlife Grant funds from each of the 13 Northeastern states that results in an annual grant opportunity to provide funding for projects that address regional conservation needs identified by the states. Twenty-one projects were funded through the RCN process from 2007-2010.

Landscape Conservation Cooperatives in the Northeast including the North Atlantic, Appalachian, South Atlantic and Upper Midwest Great Lakes were formed in 2010 as conservation science-management partnerships, consisting of federal agencies, states, tribes, universities and private organizations, focused on collaboratively developing science-based recommendations, decision-support tools and shared science capacity to guide effective conservation. The overall goal of LCCs is to define, design, and deliver landscapes that can sustain natural and cultural resources at desired levels nationwide. The LCCs are working to address major environmental and human-related factors that limit fish and wildlife populations at broad scales, including developing adaptation strategies in response to climate change. The shared science capacity provided by these partnerships will conduct biological planning and conservation design, and help direct research and monitoring necessary to inform decisions about conservation delivery. In 2010 the LCCs funded an initial round of projects to address priority regional science needs. LCCs will continue to support regional conservation science projects in the future.

**Workshop objectives**

The Albany II workshop was convened and sponsored jointly by the Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Directors, Administrators, and Fish and Wildlife Diversity Technical Committee, in association with the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) in the Northeast Region. The specific objectives of this joint workshop were to:

- Review, synthesize, evaluate, and present Regional Conservation Needs (RCN) and initial LCC projects completed or underway;
- Increase understanding and engagement by state and other conservation partners in RCN and LCC projects and goals in the Northeast;
- Review progress made toward original goals for the RCN program;
- Discuss challenges, needs, and opportunities for the RCN program and LCCs in the Northeast;
- Explore and discuss opportunities for collaborations between RCNs and LCCs in the Northeast to address common needs; and
- Develop initial consensus on a common conservation framework, vision, and highest priorities going forward.

The workshop provided an opportunity to step back and synthesize the results of the many projects that have been completed or are underway through the RCN and LCC processes, to determine how these projects might fit into a common regional conservation framework, and to identify the greatest needs for future work. By fostering information sharing and discussions among regional conservation experts, the workshop sought to clarify the "big picture" of conservation, illuminate how existing efforts complement each other, and identify key roles for each of the partners to play in the future. These activities all contributed to the overarching goal of achieving more effective and efficient conservation in the Northeast region.

The Northeast Regional Conservation Framework

As a way to help organize regional conservation activities and goals, the workshop Planning Team developed a draft Northeast Regional Conservation Framework (Figure 1) prior to the workshop. The Framework was created to organize categories of conservation activities and help assess their current status and key needs for the future.

Many of the components of the Framework correspond with elements of the Strategic Habitat Conservation approach developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Geological Survey and other adaptive resource management approaches, but the Framework has a greater emphasis on translating science into usable tools and products for managers and also more explicitly incorporates the need for information management and consideration of the human dimensions of conservation. While there are many independent projects and needs that fall under each component of this Framework, the Framework is meant to focus efforts in support of overarching regional conservation needs and goals.

By grouping projects into components (e.g. biological assessment) and linking components together through adaptive resource management, the Framework will help ensure that individual projects are complementary and identify next steps. The Framework can also help identify which pieces each partner would be best suited to address. Without this view of the bigger picture, individual projects may not complement each other efficiently and data or tool gaps may persist that limit the effectiveness of projects and the overall ability to achieve conservation goals.
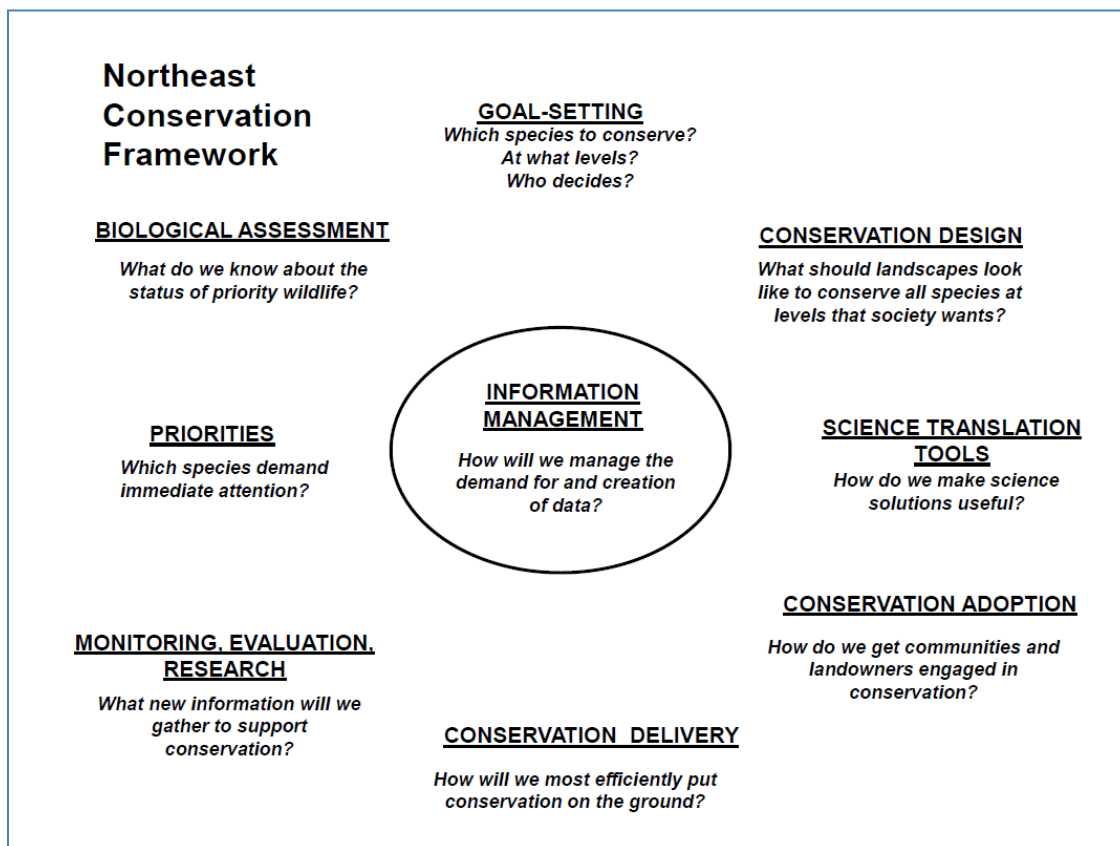


**Figure 1. The Northeast Conservation Framework as presented at the Albany II workshop**

Overview and Process

The Northeast Regional Conservation Framework Workshop ("Albany II") was held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Albany, New York on June 14-16, 2011. Eighty-six (86) participants attended the Albany II workshop, representing a cross-section of agency and nongovernmental organization representatives from agencies in 13 states, six federal government agencies and 12 nongovernmental organizations. (See Appendix A for list of participants.)

DJ Case & Associates (DJ Case), a communications firm specializing in conservation issues, was retained to assist with workshop facilitation and logistics planning.

DJ Case, through collaborative consultation with the Workshop Planning Team (Table 1), developed and deployed a pre-workshop assessment. The assessment sought broad input on the past performance and future direction of NEAFWA's regional efforts. A separate report, "Northeast Conservation Framework Workshop: Pre-Workshop Assessment Report,"[1] documents the results of 126 completed assessments and 102 partially completed assessments. Results of the assessment guided information presented at the workshop and were summarized for participants during the workshop.

*Table 1. Workshop Planning Team*

| Member | Affiliation |
|---|---|
| Andrew Milliken | USFWS/North Atlantic LCC |
| Dee Blanton | USFWS, Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration |
| Steve Fuller | North Atlantic LCC/Wildlife Management Institute |
| Becky Gwynn | VA Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries |
| David Day | PA Fish & Boat Commission/ Fish and Wildlife Diversity Tech Comm. |
| Dan Brauning | PA Game Commission/ Fish and Wildlife Diversity Tech Comm. |
| Eric Palmer | VT Fish and Wildlife/Northeast Association of Fisheries Administrators |
| George Matula | ME Dept Inland Fisheries & Wildlife/ Fish and Wildlife Diversity Tech Comm. |
| John Kanter | NH Fish and Game/Fish and Wildlife Diversity Tech Comm. |
| Karen Bennett | DE Division of Fish and Wildlife/ Fish and Wildlife Diversity Tech Comm. |
| Gordon Batcheller | NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation/Northeast Wildlife Administrators |
| Helen McMillan | North Atlantic LCC/FWS/NOAA |
| Sarah Hughes | DJ Case & Associates |
| Gwen White | DJ Case & Associates |

For further information about the outcomes and future efforts, contact any member of the workshop planning team listed above (contact info. at:
http://www.northatlanticlcc.org/pdfs/AppendixANERCFWorkshopParticipantList.pdf)

Appendices A-I include overall and table participant lists, group and table discussion notes from all sessions, a list of the posters displayed at the workshop, and TurningPoint® audience polling results for the group discussion and workshop evaluation.

Documents associated with the Albany II Workshop can be found at:
http://www.northatlanticlcc.org/rcn_workshop.html.

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[1] Report available at: http://www.northatlanticlcc.org/pdfs/13_NEAFWA_Pre-Workshop_Assessment_5-24-11_EXEC_SUMMARY.pdf

**Workshop Process**

**Table and Group discussion process**
To achieve the objectives, Albany II included a series of nine primary activities (see Appendix B for agenda):

Welcome and opening remarks, including context and purpose of the workshop
Session 1: Regional Conservation Framework
Session 2: Habitat Mapping
Session 3: Biological Assessments and Goal-setting
Session 4: From Conservation Design to Delivery
Session 5: Monitoring, Evaluation and Research
Session 6: Information Management
Session 7: Highest Priority Next Steps
Concluding remarks

The format for each session involved Session Hosts who presented information describing the relevant framework element and how it fit into the overall framework, and who synthesized RCN, LCC, Competitive State Wildlife Grant and other projects conducted in 2007 to 2010 that fit under that element. Information presented was based on slides and input from key principal investigators, some of whom spoke during the presentation. Each Session Host then summarized relevant pre-workshop assessment results and drew connections between that framework element, assessment results, Albany I outcomes and RCN or LCC Science Needs. Presentations describing each project and session presentations were made available via the workshop website. A poster session held on Tuesday evening supplemented the information presented about RCN and LCC projects (Appendix C).

For most of the workshop sessions, following the summary presentations by the Session Hosts participants convened in the same table subgroups for discussion. No table discussion was included in the first session on the regional conservation framework or the closing session on highest priority next steps. All other sessions included a table discussion period followed by group consideration.

The list of table leads, recorders and participants identified at each of the tables is presented in Appendix D.

Table leads and recorders coordinated the following process through Sessions 2-6 of the workshop:
- Participants were assigned to nine round tables of 8-10 people, including the table discussion leader and recorder.
- Facilitator/recorders used a laptop to record responses to discussion questions into a template.

- During a break, the group facilitators compiled information from the nine table recorders and prepared TurningPoint® audience polling slides, so that the top 2-3 priorities identified by each table were compiled for clarification, discussion and ranking by the entire group.

**Group participation process and tools**

TurningPoint® is a PowerPoint-based application that allows participants to "vote" on issues and questions presented on the screen in real-time. All workshop participants received a TurningPoint® remote polling device. Polling throughout the workshop was anonymous and allowed everyone in the relatively large group to participate in the discussion in a personal manner, particularly with reference to rating priority actions within each session (see all TurningPoint® polling results in Appendices E, F and G).

Items from the table discussion in Session 2 were grouped by the facilitators into issue areas for group ranking. In all other sessions the top 2-3 priorities submitted by each table were presented verbatim for group ranking. Table discussion priorities were rated by: 1= strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree. The software calculated and presented the items in priority ranking order based on the means (average rating) from compiled participant responses.

The group typically asked for clarification on a few items before polling and then discussed results of polling outcomes. At several points throughout the workshop, the group raised concerns regarding the meaning of a neutral vote, which may be truly a reaction to the item mid-way between disagreeing and agreeing or it may mean the individual had no opinion. There was no option for registering a "don't know" vote, as the numerical value for that response type would bias the means in one direction or the other and give participants an opportunity to opt out of registering a response, possibly reducing the value of individual participation.

Based on the outcomes from Session 2, the group decided that for future sessions, items would be presented verbatim as they were provided from the table discussion notes, recognizing that there would likely be some overlap and duplication in topics.

For the final session on Highest Priorities the Planning Team compiled items from each session with polling score mean ratings above 3.85 to forward for consideration on overall priorities by group polling.

A full list of the highest priorities is presented in the narrative of this summary report. All notes from the group discussions are presented in Appendix H. Additional topics and ratings for each session are presented in Appendix E with complete table discussion notes recorded in Appendix I. Group discussion polling statistics by participant affiliation are in Appendix F and slides showing bar charts for polling percentages in Appendix G.

Characteristics of Participants

Eighty-six (86) participants attended the workshop, representing a cross-section of agency and nongovernmental organization representatives from agencies in 13 states (CT, DE, MA, MD, ME, NY, NH, NJ, PA, RI, VA, VT, WV), six federal government agencies (NPS, NOAA, USDA, USEPA, US FWS, USGS) and 12 non-governmental organizations (Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies, Ducks Unlimited, Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences, Regional Plan Association, Nature Serve, The Nature Conservancy, The Trust for Public Land, UMass Amherst, University of Delaware, University of Vermont, Wildlife Conservation Society, Wildlife Management Institute).

Early in the Albany Workshop II, participants were asked a series of demographic questions regarding their involvement in Northeast regional conservation using TurningPoint®. Of those present at the opening session, just over half were state agency staff (53%) with nearly a third federal government employees (31%), 14% NGO representatives, 1% university and 1% other.

Over half of participants spend less than a quarter of their time on regional conservation responsibilities (60% combined). Positions of participants were distributed fairly evenly across administrators, program managers, biologists and other positions with 10% of the group in director positions.

Over one-third had not been involved in the RCN program (38%) with another third serving on state agency or technical review teams (36% combined). Over half were not involved in the LCC program (51%). Participants were fairly evenly distributed with the largest portion of their time on LCC (20%), RCN (20%), and SWG (28%) regional initiatives with fewer participating in joint ventures (8%) or fish habitat partnerships (7%).

Less than a quarter of the group attended the Albany I workshop (22%).

Data in Appendix F presents cross-tabulations of these characteristics by affiliation (state agency, federal agency and other).

Welcome and Opening Remarks, including Context and Purpose of the Workshop

Andrew Milliken (USFWS) opened the workshop with introductions of the Planning Team and others who produced the presentations and posters for the workshop, welcomed the participants and described the overall process to achieve key milestones towards more effective conservation in the Northeast region.

State administrator perspectives on regional conservation

Several administrators from the state perspective described the need for the workshop. Patricia Riexinger (Director of the Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources, NYSDEC) described the challenges involved with conservation and progress made since Albany I including approval of 21 projects costing $1.48 million. These projects span aquatic, terrestrial and marine environments, and range from comprehensive mapping and classification systems to very specific projects such as New England Cottontails. She stated that the directors take these programs seriously in deciding what is funded and how resources are allocated. She encouraged the group to keep moving in shaping a conservation legacy.

Greg Moore (Wildlife Administrator, DE DFW) described the critical juncture for addressing resource management at a regional level with questions expressed by many regarding the process, projects, tools and benefits of the RCN program. However, by working together, he stated that the region can make the program a shining example of applying conservation science to solve problems by examining the approach and working through new paradigms.

Eric Palmer (Fisheries Administrator, VT F&W) outlined the social, ecological, funding and staffing challenges and emphasized the value of focusing on regional challenges within the conservation framework.

**Facilitation and participation process**

Dave Case (DJ Case) explained the facilitation and discussion processes for the three-day workshop and proceeded with a set of demographic audience polling questions.

Context and purpose of the workshop

Steve Weber (NH F&G) addressed the context and purpose of the workshop by reviewing the results of Albany I, the Northeast Wildlife Teamwork Strategy (NEWTS) report to directors in 2006, and outcomes of the RCN grant program. Eric Palmer (VT F&W) followed by explaining the significance of the regional approach to these projects. Ken Elowe (USFWS) reviewed the development of the North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative (NALCC) and Mark Humpert (AFWA) spoke from the national perspective about the unique organizational and partnership characteristics of the Northeast region.

Session 1: Regional Conservation Framework

Karen Bennett (DE DFW) and Ken Elowe (USFWS) outlined the components and concept for a regional conservation framework.

Audience polling opened an extensive discussion about participants' experience with conservation planning, decision-making, and delivery in regard to key elements or concepts in the framework. Polling indicated that the group agreed strongly or very strongly (82%) that a common framework was needed, that the general set of elements made sense (81%) and that either most or all elements were there (66%). However, nearly a third indicating that some key elements were missing (29%) or they weren't sure (6%). No one felt the framework needed to be completely reworked.

While the framework elements were generally accepted, discussion centered on the differences and complementarities between species, habitat and ecosystem approaches to conservation, the role of public engagement in partnering with the agencies to determine and deliver conservation, and additional details that need to be fleshed out in developing the framework.

Session 2: Habitat Mapping

Eric Palmer (VT F&W) and Helen McMillan (NOAA/USFWS) presented an overview, projects and pre-workshop assessment findings related to this topic with input on specific projects from Mark Anderson (TNC) and Arlene Olivero Sheldon (TNC). The group responded with questions about limitations to the maps regarding incorporation of lakes or reservoirs, conservation land and ownership layers, and how partners would access data.

In table discussions, participants identified a set of highest priority additional needs for advancing habitat mapping which were grouped into categories by the facilitators and then voted on by the full group. The group rated categories of priorities in the following order:

1) Communications, tool kit, users guide
   Communication of Results
   Communication, provide products, users guide, tool kit
   Roadmap for what to do with the habitat mapping effort: communication with public, awareness, availability of data, maintenance of data, who should do the work.
2) Layers (land use, threats, refugia, invasive species)
   Additional Habitat Maps Needed
   Land Use / successional state if not already in data
   Need habitat age and structure database
   Can we link to FIA data in ongoing basis for age data
3) Finish mapping all systems (Canada, lakes)

Finish mapping all the systems

Completing the package for terrestrial, freshwater and marine -- and add lakes

Fill Gaps Marine/estuarine, Lakes, and Canada (in priority order)

Need to go into Canada, and south and west

4) Usable product (expectations, limits)

Accessibility / usability

A product can be used by or target users and partners.

Tools, Service, Support Programs

Providing easy online interface

5) Priority focus areas using map output

6) Linkages to other databases

7) Accuracy (QA/QC)

8) Model validation

9) Define audiences / users (JV, FHP, academic)

\*\*Additional priority identified by multiple tables that was not forwarded for voting:  Better aquatic temperature data/classification

Group discussion following the polling included comments on the development of communications tool kits with knowledge of the audiences, the uncertainty of identifying what kinds of priorities would be handled by RCNs or LCCs, the need to use workshop outputs to create more specific project descriptions, the need to increase input from the aquatic resources perspective, the need to make mapping more accessible, and the challenge of assessing changing landscapes.

The group decided that for future sessions, items would be presented verbatim exactly as they were provided from the table discussion notes for voting, recognizing that there may be some overlap and duplication in topics. All items identified at the tables for this session are presented in Appendix E and the full table discussion is recorded in Appendix I.

Session 3: Biological Assessments and Goal-setting

Andrew Milliken (USFWS) and Dave Day (PAFBC) presented an overview of projects and pre-workshop assessment findings related to this topic with input on specific topics by Mark Anderson (TNC) and Hector Galbraith (Manomet). No questions or concerns were raised by the participants.

In table discussions, participants identified a set of highest priority additional needs which were then voted on by the full group and shown here in rank order (highest to lowest by mean score).

1) Deliver the results (synthesis) of the projects (products) in a meaningful way to on-the-ground managers at state/local levels and provide commitment of resources to accomplish (people and funds).  Start with RCN Conservation Status Report.

2) Develop a process to develop regional representative species goals (numbers and distribution) to allow development of landscape-scale habitat design and conservation.
3) In the new SWAPs recommend adopting a consistent format/template which will allow for a region wide roll up (including population targets) for establishing goals, perhaps a consistent summary or appendix.
4) Create distribution maps for regional responsibility/high concern species - overlay on NE habitat maps.
5) Development of habitat focus areas and corridors.
6) An SGCN analysis for preparing WAP revisions - SGCN criteria, scope of taxonomic species included, consistency to threats and conservation action nomenclature so that State plans can be rolled up regionally in a consistent manner.
7) Marine, aquatic, plants data gaps and representative species for marine and aquatic systems.
8) Try to come to consensus on a pilot process to develop regional population goals which would draw from existing plans to the extent possible.
9) Immediate needs for emerging impacts: assessing biological impacts of SCGN to renewable energy (e.g. wind power, water turbines, biofuels), invasive species (e.g didymo, Asian Long-horn beetle, wolly adelgid ), or diesease (e.g.White-nose).
10) Assessment of the completeness/representativeness of current/existing data (i.e., gap analysis for source data used in regional assessments). What we have and don't have. Need to think about the application of the data before the assessments begin/are designed. Density analysis of existing data (heritage programs). Private lands are not well surveyed. SWAPs are a starting point for identifying these needs.   Representative species might be another tool.
11) Development and evaluating models to identify adequate streamflow to support biological processes and communities such as the ELOHA or CT and MA streamflow monitoring projects, and including other factors such as landscape change and social needs.
12) Cross-cutting understanding of aquatic habitat changes associated with climate change to include hydrology and geology.
13) Identify focal areas that represent the best examples of ecosystem types that allow us to define ecosystem function and integrity.
14) Expand surveys for regionally important species, especially with co-dependence and association with communities; coordinated and collaborative among partners.
15) A pilot(s) goal setting exercise for either species of suites of species and habitats; incorporating society's expectations.
16) Capacity of species to adapt to habitat change and/or other stressors.
17) Upon completion of species distribution maps, conduct Structured Decision Making Workshop for those species in NE with mandated listing decision.  Add high

priority SGCN (upon completion of regional review by NEFWDTC) into the SDM process.

18) More complete vulnerability/threat analysis (done for disease).  Focusing on critical communities and groups that we don't know a lot about.

Group discussion included comments on the delivery of the products from projects in a usable format for on-the-ground conservation, structured decision making, multi-species regional conservation tools, setting population goals for representative species for the region, and concentrating on habitat or ecological integrity.

Session 4: From Conservation Design to Delivery

Steve Fuller (WMI) and Dan Brauning (PAGC) presented an overview, projects and pre-workshop assessment findings related to this topic. One concern expressed by the group related to the age of the land cover information (2001).

In table discussions, participants identified a set of highest priority additional needs which were then voted on by the full group and shown here in rank order (highest to lowest by mean score).

1) Working with implementers/users, translate the information into usable tools in order to convince them that it's useful to them and what they are doing (cottontail as a model.) Always have specific implementation examples using the results of these projects for both buy-in and delivery. Develop a marketing, training, and capacity building strategy targeted to specific needs.

2) Provide information on landscapes of regional significance to conservation partners, big (e.g. NRCS) and small (e.g. local land trusts) to implement specific conservation actions.

3) Identification of habitat focus areas with a step up step down (Regional to local) process to implement on the ground habitat conservation, restoration, and management.

4) Provide cookbook or catalog of on-the-ground implementation details that translate conservation design results into practical actions or projects.  The regional-scale focal areas are a logical starting point for this.

5) Develop conservation designs for multiple representative species, with consideration that actions will happen by private landowners and with consideration of a changing climate and other threats and translated into a format for those who do conservation on the ground can understand and implement.

6) Take existing RCN products and fund a communication specialist to repackage and deliver information to pre-defined user groups (i.e., public, resource managers, stakeholders) with associated effectiveness measures.

7) Overlay and integrate existing datasets to delineate landscapes of regional significance (focal areas and connectivity).

8) An information delivery mechanism should be a requirement of every future RCN product to deliver information to pre-defined user groups (i.e., public, resource managers, stakeholders) with associated effectiveness measures.

9) A framework for building and aligning conservation capacity to address shared habitat objectives at mutliple spatial scales (e.g, tools, standard guidelines for small-scale road crossings like culverts, shared Farm Bill stewardship biologists/technical service providers, trainings for habitat restoration project managers like a coastal conservation corps).

10) Target science translation (outreach) efforts to areas/species that are of widespread distributed and highest responsiblity.

11) Develop set of examples or demonstration projects to illustrate how conservation design tool can lead to adaptive management on the ground.  The regional-scale focal areas are a logical starting point for this.

12) Develop comprehensive toolbox of financial tools, vehicles, and approaches to local conservation that includes federal, state, local, NGO partners.

13) Need to engage society and major stakeholders beyond the typical conservation community in entire framework process to get their buy-in, consent, perspective and get them to be part of the engine for implementation.  Consider incorporating this priority into entire conservation framework (in center or overlaying whole).

14) Good analysis on opportunities to influence other agencies to better incentivize conservation on a local level.  e.g. a town could be doing good conservation planning, and would therefore be more eligible for further funds. Need financial hook to incentivize.  See what is out there for existing grants to determine ability to incentivize. E.g. conservation easements.  Inventory existing funds being distributed either at federal or state level; then determine which ones would be most easily modified to incentivize local conservation.

15) Expand streamflow predictive model from CT river basin to the Region (Archfield RCN 2007 #6).

16) Next generation of habitat connectivity work is to be more explicit about providing something that defines what the ecological purpose (what population/species) of that corridor is and that would force conversations on how that corridor would be used.

17) Where are opportunities to manage for species of economic concern or constituent importance AND SGCN. Tools to help that, as well as communicate that to the public. BMPs for agencies that integrate both types of species.

18) Develop suite of regionally standard Best Management Practices to be implemented to reduce the spread of invasives (incl. aquatics), and share with all groups.

* *Additional priority identified by multiple tables that was not forwarded for voting:  Better information/tools on assessing sea level rise impacts on species and marsh management.

Group discussion included comments on incentives for conservation at the local level, opportunities to incorporate economics, the need for inclusion of fisheries and aquatic resources,

funding and skills for communicating about project products, not duplicating efforts on existing BMPs for invasive species, limited state agency capacity to participate in projects, working with local land use decision makers, delineating conservation focus areas, and integrating research science into conservation projects.

Session 5: Monitoring, Evaluation and Research

Dee Blanton (USFWS) and Dan Rosenblatt (NYDEC) presented an overview, projects and pre-workshop assessment findings related to this topic with input on specific projects by Tracy Tomajer (NYS DEC) and Chris Burkett (VA DGIF). The group responded with comments about using monitoring as a full-circle method for addressing conservation, the difference between measuring project effectiveness and assessing status of species and habitats, and the use of various systems for tracking efforts (e.g., TRACS, NatureServe).

In table discussions, participants identified a set of highest priority additional needs which were then voted on by the full group and shown here in rank order (highest to lowest by mean score).

1) Immediate need for reporting on success of SWG grant-funded work. (PA example - 10 fish species taken off state list) Need to package our project information as success stories that the general public/legislators can read and understand.
2) Establish Uniform Monitoring Practices that can be applied across large geographic areas for multi-jurisdictional resources (e.g., habitats for species that occur across geopolitical boundaries). These need to be relevant and applicable to inform current management decision-making. Need a consistent framework for states to implement monitoring so that we can roll up data.
3) Long-term monitoring and performance evaluation to feed into the conservation framework. Fund the implementation of the NE Regional Monitoring and Performance Reporting Framework.
4) Identify and leverage existing federal monitoring programs and develop state/tribal/ngo surveys to complement the federal surveys to provide regional status.
5) Ensure accurate monitoring of representative species to support biological assessment and conservation design.
6) Specific performance criteria and reporting must be a required part of all RCN projects -- best if they are standardized.
7) Implement the Northeast Monitoring and Performance Framework and National effectiveness measures (prioritize staff and funds to implement).
8) Ensure that relationship(s) between representative (i.e., indicator, umbrella) species and "target" species are established (i.e., assumptions or key thresholds are tested).
9) Need to design and implement a monitoring system to inform management at multiple scales as well as provide status/trends information.

10) Develop a shared regional database to be able to combine and analyze data on a regional perspective, but make flexible to allow for individual needs or species groups or guilds to be included.  Examples include: Monitoring of native pollinators (could also link to economic impacts), or freshwater mussel species, could also include current RCN invertebrate database monitoring (RCN 11), like DiscoverLife website.
11) Identify surrogates (e.g., habitats, species groups) to monitor challenging priority species.
12) Design metrics to assess effectiveness of technical assistance.
13) Inventory of monitoring efforts - all organizations, including citizen science.
14) Conduct an analysis of expected outcomes of specific management actions and identify an accepted surrogate outcome in place of monitoring every action to be more cost effective and reduce endless monitoring expenditure.  Could develop standard low level spot check monitoring program…i.e. removal of a dam that restores 2 miles of habitat will result in an increase of 1 mile of accessible spawning habitat for Atlantic salmon and 30 adult Atlantic salmon, and an increase to the adult population in the river of 15%.
15) Monitoring protocol for wetland and terrestrial habitat qaulity and degradation and investigate whether trends can be detected using remote sensing techniques for enhancing SGCNs.
16) Link species numbers to habitat acreage (or integrity); may use or start with representative species.
17) Develop a decision matrix to determine when to monitor and when it is not useful.  Apply to response of certain actions at a specific site.
18) Monitoring response of target spp or habitat changes that occur as a result of NRCS (Farm Bill) funded projects.
** Additional priority identified by multiple tables that was not forwarded for voting: Identify and increase ways to include citizen scientists in monitoring


Group discussion included comments on monitoring umbrella, indicator,  representative or target species, reporting to constituents at the regional level, communicating with Congress about program efficiencies and use of limited resources, coordinating efforts through monitoring partnerships among the US EPA and other agencies, and development of standard practices for monitoring.


Session 6: Information Management
Dave Jenkins (NJ DFW), Steve Fuller (WMI) and BJ Richardson (USFWS) presented an overview, projects and pre-workshop assessment findings related to this topic with input on specific projects by Chris Burkett (VADGIF), and Roland Kays (NYS Museum).

In table discussions, participants identified a set of highest priority additional needs which were then voted on by the full group and shown here in rank order (highest to lowest by mean score).

1) Develop a way for states, LCCs and other partners to immediately access the habitat mapping and geospatial condition analysis products coming out of the RCN process.
2) Support and engage in the forthcoming regional information management needs assessment that was identified as a top priority LCC science need. Engage all the conservation community in this process, with the goal of making better decisions.
3) Support development of SWAP database to promote consistancy in next generation of SWAPs, allow easy State rollup, guide revisions and improve accessibility.
4) Easy access to information for policy makers in Congress - outreach and advocacy for that audience, e.g. Value of basic monitoring data is not always known until there is a problem - translation of value of basic science for lay audience.
5) Create data sharing agreements between all members of NE conservation community - state, federal, non-governmental organizations - AND get their data.
6) Conduct a information needs assessment based on the Northeast Conservation Framework information needs and data flow (as illustrated by framework diagram with data flow) focused on regional scale needs, building off what exists already; includes a metadata analysis that catalogs and organizes what is available and is realistic based on agency capacity (assessment guided by steering committee)
7) Create regional geospatial database that can be shared and used among all parters (states, ACOE, USGS, USDA, FWS, NGOs…) to integrate existing databases (states, NatureServe…) to identify activities on the ground. Include terrestrial, aquatics, and marine species linked with habitat. Goal of action and set of target species for action should also be included. Not meant to be fully inclusive of all data, but is targeted to habitat management.
8) Institutionalize long term datasets on a Regional cooperative basis (security, access, data sharing, maintenance, transferable data technology).
9) Support an urgent needs assessment process to advance regional conservation data management and analysis. We need to include folks from other regional conservation efforts (e.g., NFHAP, NOAA, Gulf of Maine Council, Canada) to bring in additional datasets and data needs.
10) Regional habitat management database that includes spatial and tabular data on habitats being managed on both public and private lands, type of management, target species; consider pilot on one type of habitat.
11) Establish a module in TRACS to better capture SWAP success from partners = conservation outcomes.
12) Develop a managed lands database to document various management activities on private and public lands. This will include appropriate privacy and securities measures.
13) Leadership commit funding and staff to evaluate, analyze, and interpret existing and future datasets.
14) Tie in data on species monitoring to quickly assess regional status of species = outcome.

15) SWAP database development that also links to TRACS - needs funding to populate SWAP database.
16) Ensure that all spatial databases are designed to interface with all other existing or proposed spatial databases.
17) Provide workshops to improve collaboration between state natural heritage programs and state fish and wildlife agencies to achieve appropriate data access for regional conservation applications.
18) Provide appropriate counseling services to overcome dysfunctional data sharing relationships. (Free seven step process to those that vote "5" for this one!).
19) Integrate regional habitat classification into MoveBank database.
20) Require data analysis for funded projects.

Group discussion included comments on the presentation of MoveBank as a good example if habitat data were incorporated, either providing standards or otherwise ensuring a method for cross-linking spatial databases, and raising awareness of existing databases and improving accessibility of database output for potential users.

Session 7:  Highest Priority Next Steps

Karen Bennett (DE DFW), Andrew Milliken (USFWS), and Ken Elowe (USFWS) summarized the outcomes from discussions during the workshop and described possible next steps for the RCNs, LCCs and other regional conservation efforts.

The group suggested incorporating adaptive learning into the conservation framework through monitoring, ensuring a mechanism for feedback on tools and products after projects are completed, the use of a business model for conservation, making information comprehensible and translating tools to communities that lead conservation design, and the need to not duplicate efforts.

Actions suggested by the group included development of a decision-making process for the region using tools from the projects and identifying who needs be responsible for the various elements and tasks in the framework.

Following the initial group discussion, the group voted on the highest priority additional projects or needs from the previous sessions based on items with a mean score at or above 3.85 and some grouping of similar items The priority projects are shown here in rank order (highest to lowest by mean score).

1) Immediate need for reporting on success of SWG grant-funded work.  (PA example - 10 fish species taken off state list)  Need to package our project information as

success stories that general public/legislators can read and understand. **Monitoring, Evaluation and Research**

2) Deliver the results (synthesis) of the projects (products) in a meaningful way to on-the-ground managers at state/local levels and provide commitment of resources to accomplish (people and funds). Start with RCN Conservation Status Report. **Biological Assessments and Goal-setting**

3) Communications, tool kit, users guide. **Habitat Mapping**

4) Support and engage in the forthcoming regional information management needs assessment that was identified as a top priority LCC science need. Engage all the conservation community in this process, with the goal of making better decisions. **Information Management**

5) Develop a way for states, LCCs and other partners to immediately access the habitat mapping and geospatial condition analysis products coming out of the RCN process. **Information Management**

6) Long term monitoring and performance evaluation to feed into the conservation framework. Fund the implementation of the NE Regional Monitoring and Performance Reporting Framework. **Monitoring, Evaluation and Research**

7) Identify and leverage existing federal monitoring programs and develop state/tribal/ngo surveys to complement the federal surveys to provide regional status. **Monitoring, Evaluation and Research**

8) Support development of SWAP database to promote consistancy in next generation of SWAPs, allow easy State rollup, guide revisions and improve accessibility. **Information Management**

9) Working with implementers/users, translate the information into usable tools in order to convince them that it's useful to them and what they are doing (cottontail as a model.) Always have specific implementation examples using the results of these projects for both buy-in and delivery. Develop a marketing, training, and capacity building strategy targeted to specific needs. **Conservation Design to Delivery**

10) Create distribution maps for regional responsibility/high concern species - overlay on NE habitat maps. **Biological Assessments and Goal-setting**

11) Finish mapping all systems (Canada, lakes) **Habitat Mapping**

12) Provide information on landscapes of regional significance to conservation partners, big (e.g. NRCS) and small (e.g. local land trusts) to implement specific conservation actions. **Conservation Design to Delivery**

13) Usable product (expectations, limits). **Habitat Mapping**

14) Identification of habitat focus areas with a step up step down (Regional to local) process to implement on the ground habitat conservation, restoration, and management. **Conservation Design to Delivery**

15) Development of habitat focus areas and corridors. **Biological Assessments and Goal-setting**

16) Overlay and integrate existing datasets to delineate landscapes of regional significance (focal areas and connectivity). **Conservation Design to Delivery**

17) Develop a process to develop regional representative species goals (numbers and distribution) to allow development of landscape-scale habitat design and conservation. **Biological Assessments and Goal-setting**

18) In the new SWAPs recommend adopting a consistent format/template which will allow for a region wide roll up (including population targets) for establishing goals, perhaps a consistent summary or appendix. **Biological Assessments and Goal-setting**

19) Establish Uniform Monitoring Practices that can be applied across large geographic areas for multi-jurisdictional resources (e.g., habitats for species that occur across geopolitical boundaries). These need to be relevant and applicable to inform current management decision-making. Need a consistent framework for states to implement monitoring so that we can roll up data. [Vote #5 and table 9 will buy you a drink]. **Monitoring, Evaluation and Research**

20) Develop conservation designs for multiple representative species, with consideration that actions will happen by private landowners and with consideration of a changing climate and other threats and translated into a format for those who do conservation on the ground can understand and implement. **Conservation Design to Delivery**

21) Easy access to information for policy makers in Congress - outreach and advocacy for that audience, e.g. Value of basic monitoring data is not always known until there is a problem - translation of value of basic science for lay audience. **Information Management**

22) Mapping, accuracy and validation. **Habitat Mapping**

23) Create regional geospatial database that can be shared and used among all parters (states, ACOE, USGS, USDA, FWS, NGOs…) to integrate existing databases (states, NatureServe…) to identify activities on the ground. Include terrestrial, aquatics, and marine species linked with habitat. Goal of action and set of target species for action should also be included. Not meant to be fully inclusive of all data, but is targeted to habitat management. **Information Management**

24) Regional habitat management database that includes spatial and tabular data on habitats being managed on both public and private lands, type of management , target species; consider pilot on one type of habitat. **Information Management**

25) Layers (land use, threats, refugia, invasive species) **Habitat Mapping**

26) Take existing RCN products and fund a communication specialist to repackage and deliver information to pre-defined user groups (i.e., public, resource managers, stakeholders) with associated effectiveness measures. **Conservation Design to Delivery**

27) Provide cookbook or catalog of on-the-ground implementation details that translate conservation design results into practical actions or projects.  The regional-scale focal areas are a logical starting point for this. **Conservation Design to Delivery**
28) Ensure accurate monitoring of representative species to support biological assessment and conservation design. **Monitoring, Evaluation and Research**
29) Specific performance criteria and reporting must be a required part of all RCN projects -- best if they are standardized. **Monitoring, Evaluation and Research**
30) Institutionalize long term datasets on a Regional cooperative basis (security, access, data sharing, maintenance, transferable data technology). **Information Management**
31) An information delivery mechanism should be a requirement of every future RCN product to deliver information to pre-defined user groups (i.e., public, resource managers, stakeholders) with associated effectiveness measures. **Conservation Design to Delivery**
32) Create data sharing agreements between all members of NE conservation community - state, federal, non-governmental organizations - AND get their data. **- Information Management**

Group discussion included comments on figuring out how to use existing products before starting new ones, concerns about diffusing efforts at the regional level, and ensuring that efforts of various organizations are complementary.

The group recognized that the process for conveying the large volume of material generated in table discussions to the group prioritization process missed a lot of priorities that should not be forgotten. The planning team agreed to review the results of the workshop and synthesize results. The group polling gives insights to priorities but should be viewed with caution. The workshop discussions made a big leap forward in raising awareness of tools and the need to position the process to be more effective in future planning.

Concluding Remarks

Ken Elowe (USFWS) and Patricia Riexinger (NYDEC) provided parting reflections about the workshop, thanking the Workshop Planning Team for putting an incredible amount of work into developing the complex workshop process. They discussed a path to deliver on the priorities identified in this process to efficiently use the limited resources available in agencies and organizations. They emphasized the need to re-examine how projects are funded to ensure support for regional conservation.

Workshop Evaluation

Participants used TurningPoint® to evaluate workshop format, process, and achievement of desired outcomes, and then they filled out a hand-written Workshop Evaluation Form with open-ended comments.

Overall, participants were pleased with the workshop format, with highest ratings in order for the New York State Museum reception, registration process, poster session, meals provided, arrangements, meeting location and time. However, some participants indicated concerns in open-ended comments about holding the meetings during field season.

In regard to workshop process highest ratings in descending order were for conclusions and closing remarks, table discussion sessions, context and purpose of the workshop, regional conservation framework session, group discussions, session presentations, and highest priority next steps.

Participants felt that desired outcomes were achieved, ranking them in descending order from discussing the RCN & LCC programs, developing a consensus on a conservation framework, exploring collaborative opportunities for the RCN & LCC programs, increasing partner engagement, reviewing progress toward program goals, reviewing and evaluating projects, and lastly, achieving a common understanding of partner roles.

Key Outcomes

**Feedback on the Northeast Conservation Framework**
As mentioned above, workshop participants agreed on the need for a common conservation framework, and agreed that most of the key elements of such a framework were included in the diagram presented at the workshop. However, participants flagged the need to identify roles for each partner, in particular who should take the lead for each of the elements. Some participants also found the relationship between the elements to be unclear, and suggested adding more detail to clarify the process of how to know when to move from one element to another. The role of public and partner engagement, both in the development and implementation of the framework, also needs to be clarified.

**Current Status of Framework Elements**
Results from many completed and ongoing projects were shared during the workshop through presentations and the poster session, and outstanding science needs were identified through table and group discussions. A summary of these accomplishments and needs is presented in Table 2 at the end of this workshop summary.

**Highest Priorities Overall Grouped By Framework Element**

For each Framework element key additional project needs were identified through table discussions and group voting. The highest priority needs for each element (those scoring 3.85 and above) are listed below. A few cross-cutting themes emerged across all elements: the need for better communications/outreach and reporting on completed projects; an emphasis on data sharing and accessibility; and the desire for consistent standards and methods for activities such as mapping, monitoring, SWAP development and information management to allow for regional roll-ups and comparisons across states.

Communications and Outreach: *(note: this category does not appear in the Framework diagram but supports multiple elements)*

- Communications, tool kit, users guide
- Deliver the results (synthesis) of the projects (products) in a meaningful way to on-the-ground managers at state/local levels and provide commitment of resources to accomplish (people and funds). Start with RCN Conservation Status Report.
- Take existing RCN products and fund a communication specialist to repackage and deliver information to pre-defined user groups (i.e., public, resource managers, stakeholders) with associated effectiveness measures.
- An information delivery mechanism should be a requirement of every future RCN product to deliver information to pre-defined user groups (i.e., public, resource managers, stakeholders) with associated effectiveness measures.
- Immediate need for reporting on success of SWG grant-funded work. (PA example - 10 fish species taken off state list) Need to package our project information as success stories that general public/legislators can read and understand.
- Specific performance criteria and reporting must be a required part of all RCN projects -- best if they are standardized.
- Easy access to information for policy makers in Congress - outreach and advocacy for that audience, e.g. Value of basic monitoring data is not always known until there is a problem - translation of value of basic science for lay audience.

Habitat Mapping: *(note: Mapping also does not appear in the Framework diagram but supports multiple elements)*

- Finish mapping all systems (Canada, lakes)
- Usable product (expectations, limits)
- Mapping, accuracy and validation
- Layers (land use, threats, refugia, invasive species)

Biological Assessment:

- In the new SWAPs recommend adopting a consistent format/template which will allow for a region wide roll up (including population targets) for establishing goals, perhaps a consistent summary or appendix.
- Create distribution maps for regional responsibility/high concern species - overlay on NE habitat maps.
- Development of habitat focus areas and corridors.
- Develop a process to develop regional representative species goals (numbers and distribution) to allow development of landscape-scale habitat design and conservation.
- In the new SWAPs recommend adopting a consistent format/template which will allow for a region wide roll up (including population targets) for establishing goals, perhaps a consistent summary or appendix.

Conservation Design and Delivery
- Working with implementers/users, translate the information into usable tools in order to convince them that it's useful to them and what they are doing (cottontail as a model.) Always have specific implementation examples using the results of these projects for both buy-in and delivery. Develop a marketing, training, and capacity building strategy targeted to specific needs.
- Provide information on landscapes of regional significance to conservation partners, big (e.g. NRCS) and small (e.g. local land trusts) to implement specific conservation actions.
- Identification of habitat focus areas with a step up step down (Regional to local) process to implement on the ground habitat conservation, restoration, and management.
- Overlay and integrate existing datasets to delineate landscapes of regional significance (focal areas and connectivity).
- Develop conservation designs for multiple representative species, with consideration that actions will happen by private landowners and with consideration of a changing climate and other threats and translated into a format for those who do conservation on the ground can understand and implement.
- Provide cookbook or catalog of on-the-ground implementation details that translate conservation design results into practical actions or projects. The regional-scale focal areas are a logical starting point for this.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Research
- Long term monitoring and performance evaluation to feed into the conservation framework. Fund the implementation of the NE Regional Monitoring and Performance Reporting Framework.
- Identify and leverage existing federal monitoring programs and develop state/tribal/ngo surveys to complement the federal surveys to provide regional status.
- Establish Uniform Monitoring Practices that can be applied across large geographic areas for multi-jurisdictional resources (e.g., habitats for species that occur across geopolitical

boundaries).  These need to be relevant and applicable to inform current management decision-making.  Need a consistent framework for states to implement monitoring so that we can roll up data.

- Ensure accurate monitoring of representative species to support biological assessment and conservation design.

Information Management

- Support and engage in the forthcoming regional information management needs assessment that was identified as a top priority LCC science need.  Engage all the conservation community in this process, with the goal of making better decisions.
- Develop a way for states, LCCs and other partners to immediately access the habitat mapping and geospatial condition analysis products coming out of the RCN process.
- Support development of SWAP database to promote consistency in next generation of SWAPs, allow easy State rollup, guide revisions and improve accessibility.
- Regional habitat management database that includes spatial and tabular data on habitats being managed on both public and private lands, type of management, target species; consider pilot on one type of habitat.
- Institutionalize long term datasets on a Regional cooperative basis (security, access, data sharing, maintenance, transferable data technology).
- Create data sharing agreements between all members of NE conservation community - state, federal, ngo - AND get their data.

**Roles Identified for RCN, LCCs, and other partners**

Through table and group discussions, key roles for the RCN program, LCCs, and other partners were identified.  While in many cases multiple partners may collaborate on a project or activity, some specific roles for LCCs and the RCN program are highlighted below.  In general, LCCs were identified as best serving a general coordinating role among different conservation agencies and organizations partners, while the RCN program was highlighted as an appropriate lead for building on an existing RCN projects, addressing needs of Species of Greatest Conservation Need and State Wildlife Grants and developing regional goals that link to state goals.

Suggested RCN roles:

- Habitat Mapping:
  - Field testing of terrestrial habitat classification system
  - Application of more simple habitat mapping analyses, along with social and community impact could be coordinated through RCN.
  - Add classification for lakes and mapping of marine zones
  - NEFWDTC: Coordinate and encourage continuation of effort with NEAFWA directors

- Biological Assessment:
    - Gap analysis of biological assessment status, region-wide
    - Develop regional goals based on SWAPs
    - Look at marine data gaps and how to coordinate the research and analyses
- Information Management
    - RCN could serve as basis to institutionalize long-term datasets (additional 1% of funds).  Check into current administrative dollars at WMI as a means to support.
    - RCN website could play a major role in serving up the information needed

Suggested LCC Roles:
- Habitat Mapping
    - Serve as a regional clearing house for this type of data, and providing data service to regional partners.
    - Fund refinement of aquatic temperature habitat mapping and modeling in conjunction with USGS/EPA
    - Identify best resources for information and products
    - Extension of consistent mapping into Canada
    - Coordinate complex overlay analyses
- Biological Assessment
    - Coordinate among major partnerships including joint ventures and fish habitat partnerships
    - Look at marine data gaps and how to coordinate the research and analyses between marine, coastal, terrestrial and aquatic systems
    - Coordinate development of representative species goals
    - Coordinate vulnerability index projects
- Conservation Design/Delivery
    - Translating existing projects into usable tools (instead of using RCN funds to hire a communications coordinator)
- Information Management
    - Facilitate cross-state, program coordination
    - DOI could provide the funds and capacity necessary to institutionalize datasets
    - LCC for assessment
- Communications
    - Conduct outreach and education that states cannot due to State Wildlife Grant restrictions on outreach
    - Bring right players to the table through LCC Steering Committee, Technical Committee and projects to provide their expertise

Next Steps

The needs identified and projects discussed during the Albany II workshop will feed directly into the identification of priorities and selection of projects for both the RCN program and the LCCs. A small team of partners will work together to develop a more in-depth synthesis of these workshop results, and identify specific roles and next steps for the conservation community to consider.  These results will be shared via the workshop website and upcoming LCC and Northeast Fish and Wildlife Diversity Technical Committee meetings. It is expected that the Regional Conservation Framework will evolve over time, but can continue to serve as a means to organize activities by all partners and focus efforts towards achieving overarching conservation goals.

## Table 2.  Current status of Framework Elements

| Albany II Framework Element | Regional Projects Completed or Underway | Albany II Overall Highest Priorities | Priority RCN Topics | LCC Science Needs |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Habitat Mapping** | • Creation of Regional Habitat Cover Maps: Application of the NE Terrestrial Habitat Classification System (RCN 2007-1)<br>• An interactive, GIS-based application to estimate continuous, unimpacted daily streamflow at ungaged locations in the Connecticut River Basin (RCN 2007-6)<br>• Geospatial Condition Analysis of Northeast Habitats Based on the Northeast SGCN Habitat Maps (RCN 2009-2)<br>• Northeast Aquatic Classification and Mapping/Northeast Aquatic Habitat Classification System (Doris Duke)<br>• Northeast Terrestrial Habitat Classification System (Doris Duke)<br>• Instream Flow for Great Lakes Basin of NY and PA (RCN 2010-2) | • Finish mapping all systems (Canada, lakes)<br>• Usable product (expectations, limits)<br>• Mapping accuracy and validation<br>• Layers (land use, threats, refugia, invasives)<br>• Create distribution maps for regional responsibility/high concern species | • RCN Topic 1: Develop Regional Base Maps for Analyses of NE SGCN Data (marine) | • Habitat mapping and modeling at NALCC scale<br>• Habitat mapping and modeling of marine bird distributions and coastal migration of birds and bats |
| **Priorities** | | | • RCN Topic 7: Identify and Assess Threats to NE Species of Greatest Conservation Need | |
| **Biological Assessment** | • Identifying relationships between invasive species and Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the Northeast region (RCN 2007-3)<br>• Assessing the Likely Impacts of Climate Change on Northeastern Fish and Wildlife Habitats and Species of Greatest Conservation Need (RCN 2009-1)<br>• Evaluating the Vulnerabilities of Ecological Resources to Climate Change in the Northeast (NALCC 2010)<br>• A Regional Decision Support Tool for Identifying Vulnerabilities of Riverine Habitat and Fishes to Climate Change (UMGLLCC 2011)<br>• Full Life Cycle Vulnerability Assessments for the Birds of the Upper Midwest Great Lakes Region (UMGLLCC 2011)<br>• Selection of Representative Species (USFWS/NALCC) | | • RCN Topic 2: Identify High Priority NE Species of Greatest Conservation Need<br>• RCN Topic 3: Identify NE Species of Greatest Conservation Need Data Gaps, Design Data Collection Protocols, and Collect Data | • Species-habitat modeling and mapping of aquatic species<br>• Species-habitat modeling and mapping of terrestrial and wetland species<br>• General vulnerability assessments to northeastern fish and wildlife habitats and species<br>• Specific vulnerability assessments of northeastern amphibians and reptiles<br>• Specific vulnerability assessments of cold water stream habitats and species including brook trout |

| Albany II Framework Element | Regional Projects Completed or Underway | Albany II Overall Highest Priorities | Priority RCN Topics | LCC Science Needs |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Goal-Setting** | | • In the new SWAPs recommend adopting consistent format to allow region-wide roll up (including population targets) for establishing goals<br>• Develop a process to develop regional representative species goals | | |
| **Conservation Design** | • Northeast Regional Connectivity Assessment Project (RCN 2007-2)• Secured Lands of the Northeast (Doris Duke)• Regional Focal Areas for Species of Greatest Conservation Need• Site Adaptive Capacity, Network Resilience and Connectivity (RCN 2008-3)• Identification of Tidal Marsh Bird Focal Areas BCR 30 (RCN 2010-3)• Designing Sustainable Landscapes for Wildlife: forecasting changes to landscapes, habitats and species & development of decision support tools (NALCC 2010) • Proposal to Establish a Regional Initiative for Biomass Energy Development For Early-Succession SGCN in the Northeast (RCN 2007-7)• Distribution and Abundance of Breeding Birds in the Upper Midwest and Great Lakes Region as Influenced by Climate and Land Cover Change (UMGLLCC 2011)<br>• On a Wing and a (GIS) Layer: Prioritizing Migratory Bird Stopover Habitat along Great Lakes Shoreline (UMGLLCC 2011)<br>•Reestablishing ecological connectivity between the Great Lakes and their tributaries: prioritization in a complex system (UMGLLCC 2011) | • Identification of habitat focus areas with a step up step down (regional to local) process to implement on-the-ground habitat conservation, restoration, and management• Development of habitat focus areas and corridors• Overlay and integrate datasets to delineate landscapes of regional significance (focal areas and connectivity)• Provide information on landscapes of regional significance to conservation partners to implement specific conservation actions•Develop conservation designs for multiple representative species | • RCN Topic 4: Identification of Regional Focal Areas and Corridors for the Conservation of Species of Great Conservation Need in the Northeast | • Assessment of forest condition and management• Assessments of landscape connectivity• Managed Lands Database Development• Consistent/updated secured lands database• Identifying focal areas for conservation (for herps)• Vulnerability of coastal wetlands and beaches to sea level rise and other anthropogenic stressors• Best management practices (for vernal pool dependent herpetofauna) |
| **Science Translation Tools** | • An Interactive, GIS-based Application to Estimate Target Fish Communities in Northeastern Streams (RCN 2008-1)<br>• Forecasting changes in aquatic systems and resilience of aquatic populations (NALCC 2010)<br>• Forecast effects of sea level rise on habitat of piping plovers & identify responsive conservation strategies (NALCC 2010) | •Working with implementers/users, translate the information into usable tools | | • Climate model downscaling |
| **Conservation Adoption** | | • An information delivery mechanism should be a requirement of every future RCN product | | |

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| **Conservation Delivery** | • Implementing Bird Action Plans for Shrubland-Dependent Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the Northeast (RCN 2007-8)<br>• Development of Model Guidelines for Assisting Local Planning Boards with Conservation of Species of Greatest Conservation Need and Their Key Habitats through Local Land Use Planning (RCN 2008-2)<br>• Staying Connected in the Northern Appalachian: Mitigating Fragmentation & Climate Change Impacts on Wildlife through Functional Habitat Linkages (Comp SWG)<br>• White Nose Syndrome: Multi-state Coordination, Investigation and Rapid response to an Emerging Wildlife Health Threat (Comp SWG)<br>• Rangewide New England Cottontail Initiative (Comp SWG) | • Provide cookbook or catalog of on-the-ground implementation details that translate conservation design results into practical actions or projects | • RCN Topic 5: Design and Implement Conservation Strategies for NE Species of Greatest Conservation Need | • Adaptation planning pilot projects |
| **Monitoring, Evaluation and Research** | • Development of avian indicators and measures for monitoring threats and effectiveness of conservation actions in the Northeast (RCN 2007-4)• The Conservation Status of Key Habitats and Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the Eastern Region (RCN 2007-5)• Regional Indicators and Measures: Beyond Conservation Land (RCN 2008-5)• Development of Non-invasive Monitoring Tools for New England Cottontail Populations: Implications for Tracking Early Successional Ecosystem Health (RCN 2009-4)• Regional Analysis of Frog Monitoring (RCN 2010-4)• Northeast Regional Monitoring and Performance Reporting Framework (Doris Duke)• The Conservation of Marsh Tidal Birds: Guiding Action at the Intersection of Our Changing Landscape (Comp SWG)• Exploring the Connection Between Arousal Patterns in Hibernating Bats and White Nose Syndrome: Immediate Funding Needs for the Northeast Region (RCN 2007-9)• Lab and Field Testing of Treatments for WNS (RCN 2010-1) | •Identify and leverage existing federal monitoring programs and develop state/tribal/ngo surveys to complement the federal surveys to provide regional status• Establish Uniform Monitoring Practices that can be applied across large geographic areas for multi-jurisdictional resources•Ensure accurate monitoring of representative species to support biological assessment and conservation design• Long-term monitoring and performance evaluation to feed into the conservation framework, Fund implementation of the NE Regional Monitoring and Performance Reporting Framework• Specific performance criteria and reporting must be a required part of all RCN projects--best if they are standardized | • RCN Topic 6: Design and Implement Monitoring Protocols, Measures, and Indicators for NE Species of Greatest Conservation Need | • Analysis of recent landscape change• Adaptive Mangement Frameworks for Representative Species• Detecting changes in species distribution (for invasives) |

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| **Information Management** | • Development of an Online Database to Enhance the Conservation of SGCN Invertebrates in the Northeastern Region (RCN 2009-3)<br>• Designing a shared Great Lakes Information Management and Delivery System (IMDS) to support Landscape Conservation (UMGLLCC 2010) | • Support and engage in the forthcoming regional information needs assessment<br>• Develop a way for states, LCCs and other partners to immediately access the habitat mapping and geospatial condition analysis products coming out of the RCN process<br>• Support development of SWAP database to promote consistency in next generation of SWAPs<br>• Easy access to information for policy makers in Congress<br>• Create regional geospatial database that can be shared and used among all partners<br>• Regional habitat management database<br>• Institutionalize long term datasets on a Regional cooperative basis<br>• Create data sharing agreements between all members of NE conservation community | | • Long-term data management system<br>• Managed Lands Database Development<br>• Consistent/updated secured lands database<br>• Online tool for accessing the most recent conservation designs |
| **Communications and Outreach** | | •Communications, tool kit, users guide<br>• Take existing RCN products and fund a communications specialist to repackage and deliver information<br>• Immediate need for reporting on success of SWG grant-funded work<br>• Deliver the results (synthesis) of the projects (products) in a meaningful way | | |