



**GREAT BASIN LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION COOPERATIVE**  
(Great Basin LCC)

# Steering Committee Meeting Summary

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## STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Organization/Agency	Member
Great Basin Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit	Maureen McCarthy, chair
The Nature Conservancy	Bob Unnasch, past-chair
California Department of Fish and Game	Whitney Albright
Great Basin Research and Management Partnership	Deb Finch
Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada	Bill Campbell
Nevada Department of Wildlife	Jennifer Newmark
Trout Unlimited	Helen Neville
U.S. Geological Survey	Sue Phillips
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Ted Koch Larry Rabin
U.S. Forest Service	Bill Dunkelberger
Upper Snake River Tribes Foundation	Scott Hauser Alexis Malcomb

## GREAT BASIN LCC STAFF AND FACILITATION TEAM

Rick Kearney, coordinator  
 Matt Germino, research ecologist  
 Penny Mabie, EnviroIssues  
 Liz Mack, EnviroIssues

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## WELCOME AND AGENDA OVERVIEW

Rick Kearney, Great Basin LCC coordinator, welcomed everyone and reviewed the agenda. Maureen McCarthy, Steering Committee chair, thanked everyone for joining the meeting and emphasized the importance of hearing input from the members during the meeting.

## THREE BY THREE

Steering Committee members were asked to each prepare three slides describing their organizations top priorities, what they need to be successful, and ways the Great Basin LCC and its partners can help.

**Helen Neville, Trout Unlimited**

- Priorities: Range-wide status and management needs of Lahontan and Bonneville cutthroat and redband trout, improving prediction of stream desiccation, and improving riparian habitat
- Needs: Buy-in from agencies on trout viability models, deployment and analysis of temperature and desiccation sensors, and increased coordination with landowners
- Help from GBLCC: funding to apply models and update fish database, funding for research on stream desiccation, and working with permittees to develop spatial grazing database

Rick noted that the Great Basin LCC is currently supporting stream desiccation research and partnering with Intermountain West Joint Venture to study the seasonality of wetlands.

**Bill Dunkelberger, U.S. Forest Service**

- Priorities: conservation and restoration focused on ecological resiliency, maintaining and improving watershed function, and sage-grouse conservation
- Needs: increased capacity (staff), monitoring and adaptive management, and identify and plan for management activities across boundaries
- Help from GBLCC: facilitating a technical advisory committee to help prioritize areas in Nevada for sage-grouse treatments and research, more incorporation of traditional knowledge, and continued leadership for Great Basin Consortium and support workshops to share landscape-scale information

Rick asked Bill if he was aware of the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) management zone teams and asked how a technical advisory group would be different. Bill explained that there are several WAFWA management zone teams in the Great Basin, but they lack coordination or one group that can assimilate information and help make decisions.

Maureen noted that there has been a lot of discussion on evaluating the effectiveness of resiliency treatments and moving to metrics that go beyond acres treated. She mentioned that working with tribal partners could help researchers better understand the time frame of resiliency. She expressed interest in seeing the Great Basin LCC bring together partners to find ways to better understand ecological resiliency.

Sue Phillips pointed to the Land Treatments Digital Library that the U.S. Geological Society (USGS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) have been establishing. The library currently contains legacy data, but they are initiating a new phase to incorporate re-measurements and monitoring work. In the future, the database can be used to answer questions about effectiveness of treatments on different spatial scales.

**Bob Unnasch, The Nature Conservancy**

- Priorities: wildfire management (especially related to fuel breaks and a strategic approach), restoration of sagebrush steppe (including post-fire and rehabilitation), and whole-system conservation (conserving more than just sage-grouse)

- Needs: fuels management in anticipation of a fire (strategic location of fuel breaks, etc.), more acres restored than lost to wildfire, and consensus on taking a whole-systems approach to sagebrush steppe conservation (need to expand focus beyond just sage grouse).
- Help from GBLCC: convene all stakeholders, advocate for an ecosystem approach to land management, and gain consensus on key data information required for informed adaptive management

Rick pointed out that many organizations in the region are interested in sagebrush steppe conservation beyond sage-grouse and explained an effort between the Fish and Wildlife Service and WAFWA to develop a science initiative focusing on sagebrush obligate species. He also noted that the Joint Fire Science Program in Boise is very interested in partnering with the Great Basin LCC to better focus their fire science funding to meet the needs of managers.

Maureen asked Bob if the challenges with wildfire management are related to prediction issues, infrastructure issues, or fuel management issues. Bob responded that all three of those play a role.

#### **Bill Campbell, Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada**

- Priorities: preservation of culturally sensitive sites and artifacts, preservation of historically significant customs (pine nut gathering, medicinal plant collection, etc.), and limiting the spread of extraction industries
- Needs: open communication with Nevada tribes from federal and state agencies, and understanding that in order to maintain a healthy environment for future generations it is counterproductive to allow mineral deposits to be exploited
- Help from GBLCC: provide a conduit to decision makers for the purpose of protecting culturally significant sites (ex. Tosawhi quarry), provide a conduit to decision makers for purposeful protection of historically significant customs, and provide a conduit to decision makers to help limit the spread of extractive industries

Maureen asked if the culturally significant sites and gathering locations had been identified and documented by the tribe, noting that it can be difficult to share that information with agencies and decision makers because of its sensitive nature. Bill noted that the sites are known by the federal agencies but they face a lot of pressure from larger mining concerns which sometimes overshadow the tribes' needs. The gathering sites are usually kept quiet by the tribes, but there are tribes that are willing to come forward and assist with identifying areas that could be set aside for tribal use.

#### **Sue Phillips, USGS**

- Priorities: understanding of biological and physical processes that are working across landscapes, providing science to help managers understand and reduce the threat of rangeland fire, and understanding ecosystem resistance and resilience to inform adaptive management
- Needs: money and time, and repair of institutional obstacles to obtaining money and time (such as capacity, funding time frames, etc.)

- Help from GBLCC: continue to support research science aimed at providing unbiased information to end users, support fundamental science that discovers new knowledge, not just applied science, and assist with connecting the science with the science consumer

Maureen added that sometimes the Great Basin LCC identifies science needs that it can't fund, but the GBLCC should be diligent about spreading this information to partners and helping validate that need. Rick noted that this idea of the Great Basin LCC as a science requester is an important one and something he would like to discuss further at the upcoming all-hands LCC Network meeting.

#### **Scott Hauser, Upper Snake River Tribes Foundation**

- Priorities: climate change resilience projects (currently in phase one of conducting a vulnerability assessment for the four tribes), Hells Canyon Complex relicensing process, and the Columbia River Treaty process (tribes working to include ecosystem-based function into the treaty)
- Needs: continued funding and tribal participation, federal agency support with the projects previously mentioned, and coordination amongst the 15 Columbia Basin tribes and U.S. State Department support
- Help from GBLCC: funding opportunities, communication (between partners and tribes to let tribes know what the partners are working on and any possible collaborations), and support from any and all entities for getting the ecosystem-based function values incorporated into the treaty.

Rick explained that the Great Basin LCC is currently in discussions with the Northwest Climate Science Center to develop a support service for tribes that are performing vulnerability assessments. They have reached out to the University of Washington to develop materials that provide downscaled climate information that is relevant to tribal managers and to develop a help desk where subject matter experts are available to answer technical questions. Scott was supportive of this work and said he has some ideas he can share. Rick will follow up with Scott directly to further discuss this work.

#### **Jen Newmark, Nevada Department of Wildlife**

- Priorities: wildlife connectivity (movement corridors, habitat connectivity), climate adaptation (riparian and wet meadows, montane woodlands, springs and streams, maintenance of wildlife diversity), and education and outreach (general public losing touch with nature, need to foster knowledge and value of wildlife and wild places)
- Needs: synthesis and analysis of existing data to delineate movement corridors on a broad scale and for more species (including understanding of fragmentation and its effect on movement corridors), high quality mapping products that can help make management decisions (including quantitative and qualitative tools), and a strong communication and outreach plan
- Help from GBLCC: support projects and studies that provide useable outputs and products, support on-the-ground monitoring to validate management practices (both internal and

external monitoring), and help with the communication strategy by helping develop it with partners

Rick agreed that bringing together partners to identify common messages and language is a challenge and a definite need. He will reach out to Jen to further discuss.

### **Whitney Albright, California Department of Fish and Wildlife**

- **Priorities:** working to implement watershed plant and improving water quality under Proposition 1, implementing state wildlife action plan, and utilizing California vegetation vulnerability assessment (a research project from partnership with University of California Davis)
- **Needs:** to show success and benefits to continue to receive funding for these projects, to work to see state level strategies implemented at a project/local scale which requires partner engagement, and to do outreach about the project then provide support to internal staff
- **Help from GBLCC:** metrics for indicators of success, provide science for downscaled projects and support monitoring and adaptive management, and help spread the word about the vulnerability assessment and direct individuals to the resources

Rick mentioned that he has been asked to participate on the writing team for a western weed action plan sponsored by WAFWA's fire and invasive group. He is very interested in introducing concepts about being more proactive in response to weeds. He will call Whitney to learn more about her efforts.

### **FIVE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN**

Penny Mabie provided an overview of the strategic planning working group and their process. She reminded the committee that the plan is being presented at this meeting for adoption. Currently, the Great Basin LCC has no strategic plan. The original guidance for the Great Basin LCC has been provided by the charter created in 2010. Penny then walked through the components of the plan and asked the Steering Committee if anything was missing from the plan.

Maureen replied that she heard a lot of similarity between the 3x3 activity and the strategic plan, but noted that a few new points were raised that are not included in the current plan. Bill noted that his organizational priorities were addressed in the tribal relations goal of the plan.

Jen mentioned that it might be nice to add something about a broader communication strategy that includes the general public to Goal 2. Bob added that communication to the public is really important, but cautioned the group to be careful about resources, noting that a good outreach strategy requires a lot of time and effort and may commit the staff to a significant amount of work. Maureen recommended that the Great Basin LCC could leverage resources to do this effectively and suggested adding a bullet to the plan about articulating the fundamental science role to other agencies. Sue added that this addition would fit well under Goal 1, Objective 2.

Maureen noted that a common theme of the 3x3 was measuring ecosystem resiliency and the efficiency of treatments. She thought this concept was missing from the strategic plan and suggested a new objective under Goal 2.

The strategic plan working group will meet one more time to add in these additional concepts.

## **GREAT BASIN CONSORTIUM MEETING**

Rick announced the dates for the next consortium meeting, February 21-23, 2017 in Reno, NV. He explained that the meeting will focus largely on the science plan that is being developed as part of the Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy. Bob asked if a date and time for the in-person Steering Committee meeting had been set. Rick answered that it will be sometime on Tuesday and will not require individuals to travel on the President's Day holiday.

## **STEERING COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

### **Steering Committee Membership**

Rick provided an update on Steering Committee membership and vacancies, noting the following:

- There is currently one federal vacancy to be filled by a U.S. Department of Agriculture agency
- Three of the current tribal members are non-participatory
- Idaho and Oregon are supportive of the work of the Great Basin LCC but will not participate due to limited staffing and budget
- There is a local jurisdiction vacancy
- There are four non-governmental organizations/private community vacancies

Rick identified potential NGOs in several sectors including transportation, water management, wild horses, native plants, and wildland fire fighters. He asked the committee if there are any specific groups the Great Basin LCC should reach out to.

Bob suggested getting a cattlemen's group involved. Maureen advocated for the Great Basin Institute and asked if anyone had a specific recommendation from the wild horse community. Rick recommended reaching out to Utah's Native Plant Society.

### **Executive Leadership Team**

Rick reminded the committee that Heather Ray has left the Upper Snake River Tribes Foundation and her position as vice-chair of the leadership team. He asked for nominees to fill her position. Bill Campbell volunteered. The Steering Committee accepted his nomination.

### **Non-decisional Membership**

Rick explained that the California Tahoe Conservancy has expressed interest in joining the Steering Committee as a non-decisional member. The committee approved this new addition.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

- **Rick** will present the idea of the LCCs as science requestors at the upcoming all-hands LCC Network meeting

- **Rick** will call Scott Hauser to discuss work to support tribes with vulnerability assessments
- **Rick** will reach out to Jen Newmark to further discuss the idea of developing a common communication plan
- **Rick** will call Whitney Albright to learn more about proactive responses to weed management
- **Rick** will send out the 3x3 slides to the committee
- **Penny** will reassemble the strategic planning working group to discuss adding additional communication actions and an objective about measuring resiliency and the efficiency of treatments
- **Strategic Planning Working Group** will discuss specific asks for new working groups to implement the strategic plan