



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

Steering Committee Meeting Summary

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Organization/Agency	Member
Great Basin Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit	Maureen McCarthy, chair
Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada	Bill Campbell, vice-chair
The Nature Conservancy	Bob Unnasch, past-chair
Bureau of Land Management	Raul Morales
California Tahoe Conservancy	Patrick Wright
Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition	Julie Thompson
Friends of Nevada Wilderness	Larry Dwyer
Nevada Department of Wildlife	Jennifer Newmark
Northwest Climate Science Center	Gustavo Bisbal
Southwest Climate Science Center	Carolyn Enquist
U.S. Geological Survey	Sue Phillips
Upper Snake River Tribes Foundation	Scott Hauser Alexis Malcomb
U.S. Forest Service	Susan Elsworth (alternate for Bill Dunkelberger)

GREAT BASIN LCC STAFF AND FACILITATION TEAM

Rick Kearney, coordinator
 Matt Germino, research ecologist
 Levi Old, project coordinator
 Todd Hopkins, science coordinator
 Liz Mack, EnviroIssues
 Emma Sagor, EnviroIssues

WELCOME AND AGENDA OVERVIEW

Rick Kearney, Great Basin LCC coordinator, welcomed everyone and reviewed the agenda. Rick and Maureen McCarthy, Steering Committee chair, thanked everyone for joining the meeting and asked attendees to share updates from their organizations and ideas for engagement with the Great Basin LCC throughout the meeting.

STEERING COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Action Item Review

Rick reviewed action items from the May 2016 Steering Committee meeting.

- Rick distributed the 3x3 slides prepared by Steering Committee members for the May meeting, which showcased high-priority topics for their organizations and how the Great Basin LCC can support their organization.
- The Strategic Plan Working Group met and made updates to the strategic plan and distributed it for final review.
- The Great Basin LCC coordinated support for research on climate vulnerability assessments with the Upper Snake River Tribes Foundation and the Northwest Climate Science Center.

Science Coordinator Transition Update

Rick provided an update on the Great Basin LCC science coordinator transition. He said the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is in the process of getting management approval to release the personnel announcement. Once this is public, there will be a month long application period. Rick asked Steering Committee members to help advertise the post and encourage qualified individuals to apply. After the application window closes, Rick will participate in a series of interviews with the highest rated candidates. The position could be filled prior to the end of the calendar year, but January 2017 may be more likely.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has agreed to support a qualified federal employee to serve on a detailed assignment in the science coordinator role for no less than one month while the position is vacant. Maureen asked Steering Committee organizations to consider any federal employees who might be interested in this detailed assignment. The group thanked Todd Hopkins, Great Basin LCC science coordinator, for his service to the LCC.

PRESSING ISSUES

Rick asked Steering Committee members to share any pressing issues or updates from their organizations.

Bill Campbell, Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, said he was aware of a proposed project to pipe water to Idaho from Pyramid Lake and said this will generate significant interest among local tribes. He also said there will be additional opportunities to comment on the proposal to list the Anaconda Mine as a superfund site and explained this was opposed by a local tribe. Bill also recently attended a sagebrush preservation forum and distributed information about the Great Basin LCC.

Rick and Maureen thanked Bill for distributing information about the Great Basin LCC and asked other Steering Committee members to consider promoting the organization at other similar events. Todd added that the Great Basin LCC has developed several one-page documents about the organization's work that can be brought to meetings and asked any interested Steering Committee members to contact Rick if they would like copies.

Raul Morales, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), said there is a significant focus on mitigation in the region. Every state in the Great Basin has developed or are in the process of developing mitigation plans. Raul said there will be a need to review and evaluate these strategies. Rick said the Steering Committee includes several science-oriented organizations and suggested Raul bring forward any science needs related to this evaluation to the group.

Patrick Wright, California Tahoe Conservancy, said his organization is transitioning from more localized projects focused on the watershed and wildland interface to broader, landscape-scale projects. He said he is interested in hearing about similar initiatives. Maureen stated the Great Basin LCC recognizes the interdependency of the different areas of the landscape including the montane to grassland transition, particularly when it comes to fire mitigation and responses of ecosystems to climate change.

2016 SUPPORTED PROJECTS

Rick reviewed the process used to select the 2016 Great Basin LCC-supported projects. He noted projects were identified through two tracks:

- Six projects were identified following a request for proposals (RFP) and expert review.
- Additional projects were identified as targets of opportunity through connections and collaboration with other organizations in the conservation community.

Rick reviewed the eligible activities and the number of proposals received and accepted by activity. The only activity for which the Great Basin LCC did not accept any preproposals was synthesis of post-fire treatments for resistance and resilience. Rick reviewed the projects selected for funding. A fact sheet describing the projects is also available for download from the Great Basin LCC website. In addition to six projects identified through the RFP, the Great Basin LCC will support four additional projects, including:

- Research into the development of tools for conducting tribal climate change vulnerability assessments by a research team at the University of Washington (co-funded with the U.S. Geological Survey Northwest Climate Science Center)
- The expansion of near real-time mapping of cheatgrass throughout the entire Great Basin (co-funded with the BLM Washington Office)
- Sagebrush trends analysis (co-funded with the BLM Washington Office)
- Collection and analysis of climate and common garden seed transfer datasets (co-funded with U.S. Geological Survey and the BLM Washington Office)

Gus Bisbal, Northwest Climate Science Center, noted that the research on tribal climate vulnerability assessments will help increase tribal capacity to commit to climate adaptation planning and include a staffed helpdesk to answer questions in real time. He said tribal members who serve as Steering Committee members for the Northwest Climate Science Center will serve as advisors on the project. Maureen said several tribes are struggling to develop vulnerability assessments despite available funding for climate adaptation planning. Maureen is hosting a tribal summit in early November, which will include a team from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and others discussing the implementation of these

plans. She asked Steering Committee members to let the Great Basin LCC know if any tribes need this support.

Scott Hauser, Upper Snake River Tribes Foundation, said his organization is interested in participating in a Great Basin LCC-sponsored webinar about climate vulnerability assessments. Maureen said she will follow up with Scott offline about this opportunity.

In total, the Great Basin LCC has identified 10 new projects to support conservation research and invested \$1.05 million, which has been matched by \$1.9 million in cash or in-kind contributions by partners. Todd added that most projects received around \$100,000 in funding, and one category allowed budgets up to \$200,000. The Great Basin LCC has previously funded 28 projects, 20 of which are ongoing.

Rick asked which projects are most interesting to the Steering Committee.

- Bill said the tribal climate change vulnerability assessment work is interesting in light of EPA's funding of climate change adaptation work. He said he hopes some Nevada tribes can be included in the research project process. One focus of the Intertribal Conference of Nevada is to encourage tribes to quantify water allocations in case of drought.
- Jennifer Newmark, Nevada Department of Wildlife, said the research on the effects of Pinyon-juniper removal on non-target species will be particularly important to her agency. Rick said two projects were identified in this category because the issue is broad and no single proposal addressed the full range of non-target species.
- Susan Ellsworth, U.S. Forest Service, said the research on cheatgrass will fill a tremendous gap in the existing data.

Rick asked if any members have ideas for topics for the 2018 solicitation, emphasizing there will be a more structured conversation in the future in accordance with the strategic plan.

- Raul suggested research on the sustained impacts of drought on upland habitat.
- Sue Philips, U.S. Geological Survey, suggested research on cheatgrass control and the effectiveness of bacterial control agents. Maureen asked if this included mitigation to keep cheatgrass from spreading into certain areas. Sue said the Secretarial Order calls for research into post-cheatgrass restoration and mitigation, but that she is not aware of any existing research around proactive treatment. Maureen said she would follow up with Sue to discuss the recent Tahoe Science Implementation Program, which included information about where cheatgrass has spread and locations that are most susceptible.

Maureen suggested the Great Basin LCC host workshops with key groups involved in topics of interest between now and the 2018 solicitation to build interest and connections with potential researchers. She said she will compile a list of topics raised during the meeting and circulate to the group. Gus stated it is important the topics address management priorities as the goal is to provide actionable science.

Maureen agreed and suggested it is beneficial to balance management and scientific priorities because scientific inquiry often considers issues over a longer time horizon.

Matt said an unintended outcome of the 2016 solicitation process was the identification of multiple projects about Pinyon-juniper treatment. This highlighted the opportunity for synergistic work that looks at issues from multiple angles, but Matt noted the Great Basin LCC had to make tradeoffs because of funding constraints. Rick said this highlights the opportunity to build a base of alternative funding sources that would maximize the potential to pursue these opportunities.

Rick said he has contacted the Wilburforce Foundation, a philanthropic organization that supports scientific conservation research in the western U.S. and Canada, to discuss potential partnership opportunities. Rick said some member and partner organizations already partner with the Wilburforce Foundation, including Friends of the Nevada Wilderness.

FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

Rick said the Five-year Strategic Plan was reviewed and amended based on Steering Committee member recommendations following the May Steering Committee meeting. He then reviewed the mission and vision statements as well as the four strategic goals.

Steering Committee members were asked to accept the Five-year Strategic Plan. All members agreed to adopt the plan.

Maureen said the plan provides a path forward for the Great Basin LCC and defines its goals and objectives for the next five years. Rick and Maureen asked members to consider how their organizations can work with the Great Basin LCC to help them achieve its goals and objectives. Levi Old, Great Basin LCC project coordinator, noted he has found through his work in Oregon that many people and organizations are still learning about the Great Basin LCC. He suggested Steering Committee members look for opportunities to communicate with others about the Great Basin LCC and what it does.

CHARTER UPDATE

Rick said the Great Basin LCC Charter is due to be updated. The Charter is the founding document of the Great Basin LCC and describes how the organization operates and makes decisions. Rick suggested most of the language around how the Great Basin LCC operates remain the same and that the new vision and mission statements be added to the Charter. He also suggested removing the goals and objectives from the document as these are now included in the Five-year Strategic Plan.

Rick suggested Great Basin LCC staff make these revisions and circulate to the Steering Committee for review. Maureen asked when the Charter needs to be updated, and Rick said before the February Steering Committee meeting. Maureen asked members to disclose any comments or concerns over email and stated that no comment will be interpreted as approval.

NORTHWEST BASIN AND RANGE SYNTHESIS

Levi provided an overview of his work on the Northwest Basin and Range Synthesis project (NWBR). The project began seven months ago and aims to synthesize existing landscape planning and science to develop a shared conservation vision for regional stakeholders in the Northwest Great Basin ecoregion.

Levi reviewed the geographic boundaries of the project area. He said the project for now does not include upland forest ecosystems, and noted the sociopolitical situation in Harney County, OR may present complications.

The project has a Steering Committee with representatives from eight organizations. In addition, Levi has organized a larger group of stakeholders and built several smaller technical teams. Maureen asked if any forestry organizations are represented on the Steering Committee. Levi said the only forested part of the project area is a small section near the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, and the Steering Committee decided in their first meeting to focus on sage steppe for now.

Levi reviewed the key issues the project explores. He then discussed individual projects and activities related to these key issues, including:

- Ongoing work by Dr. Jeanne Chambers and Dr. Peter Weisberg on aquatic systems across the region. Levi said this project will begin outside of the NWBR project boundary, but they are discussing how it could be extended in the future to cover the Northwest Great Basin.
- The development of community values and economic assessments with the help of representatives from local agencies and stakeholders.
- The collection and review of 50 habitat management plans using the Open Standards database to develop a framework for organizing the conservation planning process.
- The application of lessons from the Arid Lands Initiative in a similar ecosystem in eastern Washington.

Levi concluded by reviewing several next steps for the project, including:

- Vetting the Open Standards synthesis information with local experts
- The next NWBR Steering Committee meeting on September 28, 2016
- The development of a technical work plan during the fall
- Ongoing outreach and trust building
- A small science symposium focused on the “state of the ecosystem” scheduled for February 15-16, 2017.

Rick asked how Levi managed to identify a diverse group of stakeholders and promote collaboration between people with different opinions and interests. Levi said one advantage is that the project is proactive, not reactive. He also said he believes it is important that all stakeholders feel heard and listened to, particularly during the initial stages of outreach.

Maureen said the Great Basin LCC wants to highlight places where collaboration moves beyond talking and engages diverse stakeholders in shared decision making. Levi said one value of the project is its focus on the ongoing prototyping of spatial products. Stakeholders have the opportunity to collaboratively provide input and help refine the design to make the tools as useful as possible.

ACTIVITIES IN CONNECTION WITH SECRETARIAL ORDER 3336

Rick reviewed activities related to Secretarial Order Number 3336, Rangeland Fire Prevention, Management and Restoration. Rick, Todd and Sue are part of a group writing the implementation plan for the Secretarial Order.

Sue described the process used to develop the science plan. The group identified 34 science needs via a series of webinars and then wrote statements around each, describing what science already exists and what information is needed. This document is currently out for review. Sue said the goal is to publish the plan before the secretarial taskforce meets at the end of September.

Rick said there is a parallel effort underway to prepare the Science Framework for the Conservation and Restoration Strategy under Secretarial Order 3336. This document includes suggested guidelines for developing science associated with mitigation, plans and policies. The document is now out for review and has been published as an unnumbered report by the Rocky Mountain Research Station.

Maureen asked for clarification on the differences between the two documents. Rick said the science plan establishes the key issues and science needs, while the framework provides a strategy guiding the approach going forward.

Rick said the Great Basin LCC and the Great Basin Fire Science Network are co-leading an effort to create a Science Information Portal to provide convenient access to the information in these plans. The first version of this is now available via BLM's online geoportal.

GREAT BASIN LCC PARTNERSHIP WITH U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Matt reviewed two areas of recent research supported in partnership by the Great Basin LCC and the U.S. Geological Survey.

As part of the first project, Matt's team worked with the BLM as well as a grassroots groups in southwest Idaho on large-scale demonstration trials with weed suppressive bacteria. This was identified by The Nature Conservancy as an important topic, and Matt said it has revealed promising results around the reduction of exotic annual grasses in areas where they have yet to invade.

The second project involved working with the BLM, USDA, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the State of Idaho to identify and develop monitoring systems that support an adaptive management program following the 2015 Soda Fire. Matt said funding from the Great Basin LCC allowed his research lab to take on a larger role in the planning of these sophisticated monitoring systems.

COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

Rick reviewed recent and ongoing Great Basin LCC communications efforts, including:

- A quarterly newsletter that is sent to over 1,000 people on the Great Basin LCC mailing list
- The Great Basin LCC website and Facebook account, which are regularly updated

- A new overview video, shared on the website and via the email list as well as on the national LCC website
- A new snapshot email for the Steering Committee providing a monthly review of recent Great Basin LCC activities

Rick then reviewed recent events attended by Great Basin LCC staff. He said the Great Basin LCC was the only LCC to attend the Native American Fish and Wildlife Service meeting in Flagstaff, AZ. Rick also attended the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies conference in Cody, WY. From this, Rick became an advisor to the state sagebrush initiative and is helping develop an RFP for that program. Maureen said she gave a presentation at the national Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units (CESU) meeting in June about the outcomes of the Great Basin CESU's collaboration with the Great Basin LCC.

Rick said the National LCC Council will hold a meeting in Boulder City, NV in October, hosted by the Bureau of Reclamation.

GREAT BASIN CONSORTIUM

Rick reminded Steering Committee members that the next consortium meeting will take place February 21-23, 2017 in Reno, NV. Maureen explained the meeting will focus on the implementation of the science plan that is in development as part of Secretarial Order 3336. It will be smaller than previous years and structured around workshops to address key questions and identify best practices. The output from these discussions will be used directly in the development of the science plan. Maureen asked Steering Committee members with ideas for specific workshop topics or an interest in co-chairing discussions to contact either her or Rick.

ACTION ITEMS

- **All** will help promote the personnel advertisement for the science coordinator position when it is posted
- **All** will consider ways their organizations can work with the Great Basin LCC to accomplish the goals and objectives in the Strategic Plan
- **Maureen** will follow up with Sue Philips about cheatgrass work in the Tahoe Basin
- **Maureen and Rick** will summarize a list of ideas provided for future RFP topics and distribute to facilitate the organization of workshops on these topics between now and 2018
- **Maureen** will follow up with Scott about his work with the Upper Snake River Tribes Foundation and scheduling a webinar on climate adaptation planning
- **Rick** will make suggested revisions to the Great Basin LCC Charter and distribute to Steering Committee members for review
- **Maureen** will send out the framework for the consortium conference when it is finalized
- **Rick** will reach out to Larry Dwyer for an introduction to the Wilburforce Foundation