



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 Department of Fish and Wildlife	Whitney Albright (alternate for Armand Gonzales)
Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition	Julie Thompson
Friends of Nevada Wilderness	Larry Dwyer
Intermountain Bird Observatory	Jay Carlisle
Nevada Department of Wildlife	Cris Tomlinson (alternate for Jennifer Newmark)
Northwest Climate Science Center	Gustavo Bisbal
Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah	Gaylord Robb
Trout Unlimited	Helen Neville
U.S. Forest Service	Susan Elsworth (alternate for Bill Dunkelberger)
U.S. Geological Survey	Sue Phillips
Upper Snake River Tribes Foundation	Scott Hauser

GREAT BASIN LCC STAFF AND FACILITATION TEAM

Rick Kearney, coordinator
 Matt Germino, research ecologist
 Linda Allison, interim 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 said the goal for the meeting is to share updates on recent Great Basin LCC work and discuss the direction and priorities for 2017, including introducing topics that will be discussed at the next in-person Steering Committee meeting in February.

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 August 2016 Steering Committee meeting.

- Rick thanked the Steering Committee for sharing the science coordinator announcement when it was released in October. Several applications were received, and Rick is currently participating in interviews with candidates. Rick said the Great Basin LCC expects to announce the new science coordinator before Dec. 21, with the new person starting in the position before Jan. 19.
- Several Steering Committee members shared ideas for collaboration between their organizations and the Great Basin LCC with Rick and Maureen following the last meeting. Rick encouraged other members to do the same.
- Maureen spoke with Sue Phillips, U.S. Geological Survey, about cheatgrass work in the Tahoe Basin.
- Rick identified suggested revisions to the Steering Committee charter and will distribute it to the Steering Committee for review following the call.
- Rick met with the Wilburforce Foundation in Seattle to discuss potential opportunities for collaboration with the Great Basin LCC. Rick thanked Larry Dwyer, Friends of the Nevada Wilderness, for the introduction.
- Maureen and the Great Basin Consortium finalized the framework and agenda for the 2017 Consortium Conference.
- Rick and Maureen coordinated with Scott Hauser, Upper Snake River Tribes Foundation, and Gus Bisbal, Northwest Climate Science Center (NWCSC), regarding climate adaptation planning work.
- Maureen and Rick have not had an opportunity to prepare a list of ideas for future request for proposal (RFP) topics following the discussion during the last Steering Committee meeting. Rick said funding may be available from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to support an RFP in 2017.

Executive Leadership Team Transition

Rick explained it is time for leadership on the Steering Committee Executive Team to transition. Bob Unnasch, Steering Committee past-chair, completes his time on the team at the end of 2016. Bill Campbell, Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, will transition from vice-chair to Chair. Maureen McCarthy will transition from chair to past-chair. The vice-chair position will be open.

Rick asked for nominees or volunteers for the 2017 vice-chair position. None were provided. Maureen and Rick asked members to think about the position and contact them following the call if they are interested. Maureen will also be contacting members to recruit for the position.

PRESSING ISSUES

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

Whitney Albright, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), said the agency is working on revising the California State Climate Adaptation Strategy for 2017. This involves collaborating with several other state agencies. The CDFW is leading the development of the biodiversity and habitat sections. Whitney said a draft will be ready by mid-January.

Maureen noted that the CESU successfully completed a five-year renewal agreement. They are also in discussion with two organizations who are interested in joining the CESU, including the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA). The CESU plans to begin several new projects in the spring field season. Maureen said they hope funding for this work continues under the new presidential administration. The annual meeting for the CESU will be held concurrently with the Great Basin Consortium Conference in February, and Maureen said anyone interested is welcome to attend.

Raul Morales, BLM, said he would like to explore ways the Great Basin LCC can continue engaging broader groups in the Great Basin. He also would like the group to discuss how the Great Basin LCC communicates the relevancy and importance of its work, particularly in the context of the new presidential administration.

Jay Carlisle, Intermountain Bird Observatory, said he is helping coordinate the Idaho Bird Conservation Partnership, which held their Fall meeting in November. Key topics of discussion at the meeting included solar farms and dynamic wetland mapping. Jay said he is interested in discussing opportunities for the Great Basin LCC to support work on flood irrigation and aquifer recharge issues. Maureen said she would follow up with Jay to discuss flood irrigation and alternative energy development further.

Cris Tomlinson, Nevada Department of Wildlife, said the agency is working with WAFWA's Bird Conservation Committee to identify game and non-game sagebrush obligates in order to support sage-grouse conservation efforts. Cris said there are some open RFPs related to this work. Rick said he is serving on a review committee for one of these RFPs and expects an announcement shortly. Cris also said the agency is interested in starting a national conversation about the need to better identify bird migration pathways, particularly in regards to renewable energy development. The agency is also working on the Integrated Wildlife Action Plan, which includes information on species at high risk from climate change.

Larry Dwyer, Friends of Nevada Wilderness, said the organization believes wilderness protection is the highest level of protection possible. They are currently working in the Battle Mountain District, where Larry said the biggest challenge is convincing BLM district office staff that areas have wilderness characteristics and are deserving of that level of protection. He said this is largely a resource issue, and noted Friends of Nevada Wilderness has the personnel and resources to study and survey these areas. Larry said the group is also concerned about proposed military encroachments proposed near Nellis Airforce Base. The base is currently under joint management, but Larry said the Airforce would like to take full ownership, including over the sheep range.

Bill Campbell, Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, said the tribes are concerned about the outcome of the election and the availability of funding for tribal programs in the coming years. A great deal of funding for climate adaptation trainings and programs has come from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and it is not clear if this will continue under the new administration. The EPA is requiring all tribes to develop environmental plans, and Bill said these have various timetables. Bill said the Council applied for General Assistance Program funding for water protection work in 2017. The Council is also

concerned about the issues related to the Dakota Access Pipeline Project near the Standing Rock Indian Reservation and are exploring how they can help. Finally, Bill said the Anaconda Copper Mine has been proposed for listing as a superfund site. A comment period is currently underway.

Gaylord Robb, Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah, said the Tribe is closely following the efforts by the State of Utah to take over public lands. The Tribe is also discussing cultural preservation and protection and the effects of climate change on these resources.

Bob Unnasch, The Nature Conservancy, said each chapter of the organization around the country has its own priorities. In the Great Basin, the organization is supporting statewide mitigation programs to measure impacts on sagebrush steppe. The programs aim to reduce or eliminate development impacts on the highest quality sagebrush habitat and to focus mitigation crediting actions where they have the highest possibility of impact. The Nature Conservancy is also helping states with the process of revising their wildlife action plans. Bob said Oregon, Wyoming and Idaho have all focused on better integrating climate change issues into these plans.

Susan Elsworth, U.S. Forest Service, said the Service will initiate the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for a forest-wide noxious weed treatment control project in the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. Susan said this could result in additional tools for controlling invasive annual grasses. She said she was interested to hear more about the products coming out of Great Basin LCC-supported work and how this might inform the NEPA process.

Scott Hauser with the Upper Snake River Tribes (USRT) Foundation said the foundation is in the final stages of completing its climate change vulnerability assessment, which should be completed by mid-January. Scott gave five presentations on climate change projects this fall and is working with Dr. Meade Krosby on her Great Basin LCC-supported vulnerability assessment project. The Foundation is a cooperating agency on the Columbia River System Operations Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which examines 14 federal dams in the Columbia River Basin. The NEPA process is being led by the Bonneville Power Administration, Army Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation. Scott said the USRT have been heavily involved in the Hells Canyon Dam lifting process over the last 10 years. Idaho recently approved new water quality standards and fish consumption rates following a 4.5-year review, and USRT was very involved in the process. Scott said USRT is very concerned with what the new administration will mean for the EPA and funding for the foundations' environmental program director position. USRT will be interviewing candidates for this position over the next few weeks.

Helen Neville, Trout Unlimited, said the focus of the organization in the Great Basin has been on trout in the Northern Great Basin. Trout Unlimited has been working with agency, university and tribal partners to develop a model for population viability analysis in this area, and they hope to have the model completed in March. The organization has also been working with Jason Dunham on work monitoring stream temperature and flow permanence across the Great Basin. Helen said she is also the incoming president for the Idaho Chapter of the American Fisheries Society. The chapter will hold their annual meeting March 1-3 in Boise in conjunction with The Wildlife Society.

Gus Bisbal with the NWCSC said they are close to selecting a tribal liaison, and they hope this individual will work with other tribal liaisons as well as the LCCs in the region. Gus said the NWCSC is also in the process of re-competing its hosting agreement. The current RFP closes January 12, and this will determine who will host the NWCSC over the next five to six years. Finally, the NWCSC is launching a

science advisory panel to assist with the evaluation of region-wide science. Gus said he is confident several Great Basin LCC priorities will be reflected on this panel's agenda.

Sue Phillips, U.S. Geological Survey, has been very engaged in efforts related to Secretarial Order 3336. The science framework for the conservation and restoration strategy has just completed the peer review process and will be published soon.

ADVOCATING FOR THE GBLCC

New Decision Makers Video

Rick introduced a new video developed by the Great Basin LCC to engage decision makers. The video highlights opportunities for senior leadership to collaborate with the LCC and will be distributed to the Steering Committee through the monthly snapshot email the week of Dec. 11.

Bill said he felt the video does a good job targeting decision makers but asked if the Great Basin LCC could produce a similar video aimed at recreationists in the Great Basin. Bill suggested this could highlight what the LCC is doing to preserve the Great Basin through their efforts, which in turn benefits the hikers, hunters and others who enjoy the landscape. Maureen agreed with Bill and said the LCC has not been very effective in engaging these groups to date. She noted that other LCCs are forming connections with these groups through hunting and fishing organizations. Cris Tomlinson echoed Bill and Maureen's statements and said the timing for this outreach is ideal given the discussion about privatizing federal land.

Rick said the Great Basin LCC will consider opportunities for engaging these groups, including the possibility of producing a video targeting recreationists.

Spreading the Word

Rick reviewed other ways Steering Committee members can help spread the word about the Great Basin LCC, including sharing relevant updates with colleagues, forwarding quarterly newsletters and bringing Great Basin LCC factsheets to events. Rick also encouraged Steering Committee members to inform Great Basin LCC staff about events organized by their home organizations so they can be added to the Great Basin LCC calendar.

Rick mentioned he is willing to travel and speak with different groups about the work of the Great Basin LCC. Bill said he will have the tribal co-chair from the Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada send Rick an invite to their next committee meeting, which will take place in Stewart Ranch, NV at the end of January.

Maureen said she spoke with the tribal representative from the Desert LCC at the Native Waters on Arid Lands conference, who expressed interest in collaborating to achieve broader tribal participation across the region. Maureen said the Great Basin LCC should consider partnering with them for a workshop at the next Native Waters on Arid Lands conference. In general, Maureen suggested the Great Basin get the word out about its work by partnering with adjacent LCCs on workshops and events.

Rick said the Lake Tahoe West Restoration Partnership, co-led by the California Tahoe Conservancy (a Steering Committee member organization), has formed in the Lake Tahoe Basin at the western fringe of

the Great Basin LCC's geography. The partners, including the U.S. Forest Service, California [Department of Forestry and Fire Protection](#) and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency are working to make the Tahoe Basin more fire resilient. Rick explained California has experienced extreme droughts over the last decade, and an estimated 110 million trees within the national and state forest system are dead.

GREAT BASIN LCC EVALUATION

Rick said that the Great Basin LCC is nearing its five-year anniversary. In light of this milestone, the Great Basin LCC has asked EnviroIssues to conduct an evaluation of the LCC and seek feedback from Steering Committee members. Following the meeting, an evaluation link was distributed via email. Liz Mack, asked Steering Committee members to provide feedback by Dec. 16. The online survey takes approximately 15 minutes to complete, and Rick said it is designed to collect input on how the Great Basin LCC is performing, barriers to participation and opportunities to increase engagement among members. A summary of the feedback received will be presented at the February in-person meeting.

NEW CHEATGRASS WORK

Overview of the Research

Matt Germino, Great Basin LCC research ecologist, gave a presentation on recent Great Basin LCC-supported research on using bacteria to control the spread of cheatgrass. He said the projects provide an example of a diverse way the LCC has engaged in a landscape-level issue.

Exotic annual grasses are undeniably one of the greatest drivers of the loss of sagebrush habitat in the Great Basin. Secretarial Order 3336 calls for the development of large-scale tools to address the spread of cheatgrass. Dr. Anne Kennedy with the Great Basin Institute discovered the bacteria *P. fluorescens* can have a virulent suppressive effect on cheatgrass and other invasive grasses. Bacterial strains can be added to the soil as spores and control the spread of these species.

The Great Basin LCC's involvement with this research began in 2013 when it engaged in early discussions with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service about testing bacteria as a method for controlling cheatgrass. In August 2015, the LCC participated in a national expert panel convened to review the state of knowledge around the subject. The panel concluded that careful testing at smaller scales was needed. In fall 2015, however, the BLM began implementing large-scale tests using D7, a strain of the bacteria. The Great Basin LCC engaged in national-level discussions to introduce scientific elements to the trials to ensure the information gained from the experiments was robust and useful. In December 2015, the Great Basin LCC formally supported a project led by Anne Kennedy to test one strain on private lands in Nevada.

Following the release of Secretarial Order 3336, activities increased. In 2016, the Idaho Sage Grouse Action Team requested the Great Basin LCC guide a science plan for assessing two strains of the bacteria in Idaho. The LCC prepared a proposal and partners contributed pilot funding for experimentally controlled and replicated field experiments applied between October and December 2016. Responses will be measured for five years. At the same time, Idaho Fish and Game undertook the first operational use of one of the bacteria strains on wildfire sites. The Great Basin LCC alerted them of the experimental nature of their trials and helped bring experimental design to the treatments. The LCC also participated in the development of the plan for implementing the Secretarial Order 3336 action item on large-scale research and demonstration projects.

Matt explained that the BLM recently requested the Great Basin LCC potentially organize and manage a \$500,000 RFP for research and demonstration projects on invasive grass control. He said this is not yet confirmed, but alerted the Steering Committee that the LCC traditionally brings funding proposal to the committee for approval before making decisions. Rick said he received an email from a BLM contact in Washington D.C. indicating it may be some time before a final decision is made on whether to support this RFP.

Sue said she has been involved with developing the workplan as part of the Secretarial Order action item related to large-scale demonstration projects. One of the goals is to instigate new research on the ground, and she said it is her understanding as well that the BLM is planning to support this work. She noted the election may have impacted this.

Discussion

Rick said these efforts are a great example of the Great Basin LCC's work on the ground and in collaboration with state, federal and private partners. Maureen agreed and suggested the LCC highlight this activity as an example of aligning science and management efforts.

Bill said he appreciated the presentation and is hopeful this research will help address the issues surrounding invasive grasses. He said it is important to keep in mind that chemicals like DDT were used in the past and thought to be a solution to a large problem when they instead led to harmful consequences. Matt emphasized that it is important to understand there will never be a "silver bullet" to address these issues. Maureen said it is important to assess the long-term implications of using this type of methodology, and said it is useful for the Great Basin LCC to ask these kinds of questions.

Rick said the use of bacteria may be one tool of many, including possibly grazing, mowing, controlled burning and herbicide use. The Great Basin LCC is also supporting work by researchers at the University of Nevada Reno to better understand cheatgrass die offs.

PUBLIC FORUM

Plan for the Public Forum

Rick announced the Great Basin LCC Virtual Public Forum will take place Jan. 23-Feb. 6, 2017. A kick-off webinar will be held on Jan. 23 at 10 a.m.

The Public Forum is an interactive website that shares information about the Great Basin LCC with the larger conservation community and provides a platform to collect input on several topics. This year's Forum will address the following key topics:

- A brief overview of the Great Basin LCC
- Great Basin LCC supported projects and collaborations
- Rangeland Fire Prevention and Management
- Expanding resistance and resilience work to forests and woodlands
- Working with Tribal partners
- Information sharing

Forum participants will be asked to provide feedback on the following topics:

- Priorities for conservation work in the Great Basin
- Work related to Secretarial Order 3336

- Potential non-governmental organizations and Tribal representatives to join the Steering Committee
- Topics for future webinars
- The public's perception of the Great Basin LCC

Steering Committee Member Roles in the Forum

Rick said the kick-off webinar will contain several short presentations on topics relevant to the Public Forum. The topics include:

- Rangeland Fire Prevention, Management and Restoration
- WAFWA Fire and Invasives work
- The Great Basin Consortium Conference
- Work supporting Great Basin Tribes
- Resistance and resilience in forests and woodlands
- 2016 webinars and information sharing

Rick asked for Steering Committee members to volunteer to present these different topics. Maureen volunteered to speak about the Great Basin Consortium Conference, and Bill agreed to speak about working with Great Basin Tribes. Rick asked other members to contact him by email if they are interested in speaking about the remaining topics. If Rick does not hear from any volunteers, he and Maureen will follow up directly with certain members.

Types of Feedback the Great Basin LCC Should Solicit

Rick asked if there are any other issues the Great Basin LCC should solicit feedback on through the Public Forum or any additional information the LCC should share with the conservation community.

Maureen suggested it would be helpful to define what is meant by taking a "landscape-scale" approach to conservation.

Bill said while it is beneficial to talk to the conservation community, the Great Basin LCC should also seek to reach private individuals who live, work and recreate in the landscape. Maureen agreed and pointed out that the Public Forum could be a useful venue for this kind of outreach.

Maureen noted there is a great deal of uncertainty about the impact of the administration transition on conservation work. She said that the Great Basin LCC and similar organization will likely not have the same level of support from federal agencies, and therefore it is even more important to engage a broader section of the community. She suggested the kick-off webinar could be an opportunity to explain the relevance of the LCC's work to this larger audience. Raul agreed and said part of this involves explaining the "all hands, all lands" approach.

Maureen and Raul suggested the Steering Committee leadership could have discussions with other LCCs about developing a message that could generate grassroots support. This will likely also involve discussing issues like energy and resource development. Rick suggested economic development will be a priority for the next administration, and the LCC's future work, for example, on forests and woodlands could touch on messages of economic benefits. Maureen suggested it is important to focus on increasing the relevancy of the Great Basin LCC to people in the Great Basin first.

GREAT BASIN CONSORTIUM

Maureen provided an update on the Great Basin Consortium Conference, which will take place Feb. 21-23, 2017 at the University of Nevada Reno. The theme for the conference is charting a course for rangeland science in the sagebrush biome, and breakout topics will include: fire, invasives, climate change, restoration, and sagebrush/sage-grouse. It will focus on collecting ideas for implementing the Integrated Rangeland Science Plan. Maureen encouraged Steering Committee members and their organizations to participate.

Liz said the registration information is available on the Great Basin LCC website. Rick reminded attendees that the in-person Steering Committee meeting will take place during the conference.

2016 HIGHLIGHTS AND 2017 WORK PLAN

Rick reviewed highlights from the Great Basin LCC's work in 2016. This year, the Great Basin LCC:

- Played a large role supporting work related to Rangeland Fire Prevention, Management and Restoration
- Served as the primary organizers of the All Hands, All Lands conference
- Co-sponsored the Great Basin Climate Forum Series
- Sponsored a Tribal Climate Adaptation Training in Fort Hall, ID
- Finalized a new five-year strategic plan
- Supported six new science projects
- Supported work to build Tribal capacity for climate change vulnerability assessments
- Provided support for the Northwest Basin and Range Synthesis and Great Sheldon-Hart Mountain Collaborative
- In addition, Matt Germino published book on invasive grasses from the Bromus genus

Rick reviewed statistics related to the Great Basin LCC's outreach efforts in 2016. This year, the Great Basin LCC:

- Sent four newsletters to over 1,300 subscribers
- Hosted seven webinars, with attendance ranging from 30 – 109
- Co-hosted three additional collaborative webinars
- Produced two new videos. The Great Basin LCC overview video was viewed more than 200 times
- Hosted a virtual Public Forum with 230 participants
- Organized the All Hands, All Lands conference, attended by over 500 people in person and 200 additional people online
- Hosted GreatBasinLCC.org, which was visited by 6,800 unique website users
- Maintained the Great Basin LCC Facebook page, which is followed by 384 people

Rick reviewed the proposed work plan for 2017. The Great Basin LCC expects to continue work related to Rangeland Fire Prevention, Management and Restoration; communication and outreach; the Northwest Basin and Range Synthesis; and the Great Sheldon-Hart Mountain Collaborative. New work for 2017 will involve: potentially supporting an RFP for further research on cheatgrass and other invasives; expanding resistance and resilience work to forests and woodlands; and hosting a new webinar series.

Rick asked if the Steering Committee had any feedback on this proposed work plan. Raul suggested the 2017 workload needs to include a focus on the presidential transition and developing messaging around the importance of the Great Basin LCC's work. Maureen agreed and said it will be important to allow

some flexibility to focus on topics that help keep the organization's work relevant to those in the Great Basin. Bill and Cris suggested the Great Basin LCC aim to seek support from recreationists and sportsman.

ACTION ITEMS

- **All** interested in volunteering to serve as Steering Committee vice-chair will contact Rick and Maureen.
- **Maureen** will follow up directly with members about serving as vice-chair if no one volunteers.
- **All** will complete the Great Basin LCC Steering Committee Evaluation.
- **All** will volunteer for topics they could speak about on the Jan. 23 Public Forum kick-off webinar.
- **All** will consider ways their organization can work with the Great Basin LCC and will share these ideas with Rick and Maureen.
- **All** will help promote the Great Basin LCC by sharing the new decision makers video, news updates, newsletters and information from the LCC with their networks.
- **All** will inform Rick of any events their organizations are hosting that the Great Basin LCC should publicize.
- **All** will inform Rick of opportunities for Great Basin LCC staff to present about our work.
- **All** will register for the Great Basin Consortium Conference if they plan to attend and advertise it to their networks.
- **Bill** will coordinate with Rick about the committee meeting at Stewart Ranch at end of January.
- **Maureen** will connect with Jay Carlisle about flood irrigation and energy issues and strategize for how the Great Basin LCC can support this work.
- **Maureen** will reach out to the tribal representative from the Desert LCC to discuss opportunities for collaboration.
- **Rick** will circulate the revised Great Basin LCC Charter for Steering Committee review.
- **Rick and Liz** will coordinate with Maureen and Bill regarding their presentations during the Jan. 23 Public Forum kick-off webinar.
- **Rick and Liz** will include a definition of "landscape-scale conservation" in the Public Forum content.
- **Rick** will add engaging a broader audience, building grassroots support for the work of the Great Basin LCC and communicating the relevancy of the organization to those beyond the conservation community to the 2017 Work Plan.
- **Rick** will continue discussions around producing a video focused on recreationists in the Great Basin.