

Meeting Summary

Great Basin LCC Science and Traditional Ecological Knowledge

Working Group: Webinar #7

April 20, 2015

Participants

S-TEK working group:

- Dirk Netz, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
- Heather Ray, Upper Snake River Tribes Foundation
- John McCann, U.S. Forest Service
- Maureen McCarthy, University of Nevada, Reno
- Jeanne Chambers, U.S. Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station
- Keith Hatch, BIA Northwest Regional Office
- Jennifer Newmark, Nevada Natural Heritage Program
- Jim Hurja, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest

S-TEK Staff:

- Todd Hopkins, Science Coordinator, Great Basin LCC
- Ryan Orth, EnviroIssues
- Bridger Wineman, EnviroIssues

Meeting documents

- Presentation slides

Key Discussion Topics

Welcome and agenda overview

Todd Hopkins, Great Basin LCC Science Coordinator, welcomed attendees. Todd introduced the agenda topics which included reviewing feedback from the Great Basin LCC Steering Committee on the draft strategic plan, proposed changes to the plan, annual and biennial processes, and reviewing next steps.

Feedback from the LCC Steering Committee

Todd described direction from the Steering Committee which included to:

- Focus on providing support for integrative science and planning work.
- Prioritize topics that cross ecosystems and on interactions among ecosystems. There was concern that the idea of cycling through focusing on different ecosystems categories during project funding cycles would take too long and limit the LCC's flexibility.
- Maintain flexibility to support transformative science when opportunities arise.

- Reflect that LCC activities encompass more than project funding.

Proposed changes to the draft S-TEK Plan

Todd described proposed changes to the S-TEK strategy based on Steering Committee feedback and previous input from the working group. Changes include identifying the LCC's priority topics as the drivers, focused on those that apply to all ecosystem categories. A biennial project funding schedule will allow for a greater amount of funding available at once and will enable projects which address those cross-cutting topics. The other priority topics previously identified by the group will be retained as second-order priorities and addressed through a smaller funding set-aside. The table of focal topics the group constructed through the impact matrix exercise will be reoriented to focus on climate drivers instead of ecosystems to describe the ecosystem-based, second-order priorities.

The focal topics include 1) Precipitation, temperature, variability and extreme climatic events, and 2) Changes in ecosystem structure, processes, function and interaction. Second-order priorities include the climate-related drivers of surface water / groundwater interaction, surface water availability, fire, invasives, and insects, disease and pathogens as they related to the ecosystem categories identified.

Discussion:

- Jeanne Chambers, USFS Rocky Mountain Research Station, said the changes Todd described make sense and follow some of the most recent discussions with the working group.
- Maureen McCarthy, University of Nevada, said she is enthusiastic about the proposed changes. She said she is still concerned about the pending U.S. Department of the Interior [secretarial order 3336](#). The order calls on the LCC to play a role in responding to the threat of rangeland fire. Maureen said the strategy should include a separate activity category, or perhaps some consideration in the implementation section, to allow the LCC to respond quickly to emerging issues and opportunities such as the secretarial order.
- Todd said the secretarial order identifies the Great Basin LCC as an implementer of actions to help address the rangeland fire threat. It was shared in draft form with the LCC. The LCC's S-TEK strategy should be nimble enough to address these kinds of opportunities.
- Jeanne said it seems activities to address rangeland fire could easily fit within the second proposed priority topic, regarding changes in ecosystem structure. She said the group may want to include specific treatments or actions that address this driver. She asked if there is a focal topic that specifically addresses improved technology and methods for conserving ecosystems. The LCC has funded some improved techniques in the past. That type of work appears to be the only thing that is not specifically reflected in the focal topics.

Todd said a final area of feedback from the Steering Committee was to ensure the plan reflects project funding as only one type of activity in which the LCC will engage. The LCC is meant to span programs. To better reflect this integrative role, the following categories were proposed to characterize activity types in the plan:

- Knowledge discovery
- Planning
- Implementation
- Network building

Todd said the knowledge discovery category includes development and use of innovative technology, developing novel tools and approaches, and integration of existing data. Planning includes climate adaptation trainings and planning. The implementation category includes developing tools and providing trainings which apply science on the landscape. The final category, network building includes LCC activities like the Great Basin Consortium and the Climate Forum which help assemble a strategic network of programs. Project funding provided by the LCC will likely fall under the categories of knowledge discovery, and planning and implementation.

Annual and biennial processes

Biennial project funding will focus on cross-cutting topics. The LCC will also provide climate adaptation funding for tribes and establish a set-aside for second-order, ecosystem-based priority topics and for emerging issues.

Focal topics and activities

Todd reviewed the criteria for establishing focal topics which include that they are timely, achievable, regionally coordinated and coordinated with the National LCC network. Criteria for annual activities are that they are feasible, effective and relevant. The LCC will evaluate effectiveness of the activities based on qualitative and quantitative metrics.

Todd said the LCC put on one climate adaptation training and two more are scheduled. The trainings will include 50 to 60 people. The LCC would like to provide funds for adaptation planning following trainings.

Todd explained that there will be a planning phase for the LCC's project funding activities during which the S-TEK group might discuss the gaps and linkages to address during the next funding period. The biennial funding cycle provides more time for planning and strategizing.

Discussion:

- Maureen suggested noting that the time allowed by the biennial funding cycling will include review and evaluation. Todd agreed that evaluation will be included in the process as well.

- Jeanne said she likes like the way the strategic plan is shaping up. She suggested adding criteria for determining focal activities about leveraging partner investment and avoiding duplication of efforts.
- Todd said the process of using pre-proposals and an invitational RFP will help the LCC to select unique projects.
- Maureen noted the LCC should look to leverage investment and identify the cross-cutting gaps that are not addressed by the other agencies.
- Todd said language about leveraging investment and supporting unique work will be included in the criteria listed in the plan.

Next steps

Todd said next steps include revising the draft plan with the latest direction from this call and then providing it for the working group to review. The Steering Committee will be asked to approve the draft plan at their June meeting.

Ryan said the S-TEK working group probably will not need to have another call on the strategic plan unless there are a lot of comments to discuss.

Todd and Ryan thanked working group members for their continued contributions and the call was adjourned.

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