

Eastern U.S. Conservation Division

Peer Review Workshops – 2011 (prepared November 23, 2010)

Purpose of Workshop:

The main purpose of this workshop is to advance development of two to three high leverage conservation actions and measures that share common strategic themes across participating landscapes using in depth peer review. The workshop should provide a forum for teams to share and explore common challenges, opportunities, lessons learned and innovative approaches for landscape conservation.

Toward this end, teams will come to the Peer Review workshop with all 5 components of a landscape Conservation Action Plan outlined below. This will be accomplished using a series of WebEx calls designed to help each team arrive at the workshop ready for peer review of their strategic actions and measures. Targets, threats, and objectives will already have received peer review during the WebEx calls. We will provide examples of the next necessary component on each call, to help teams make progress between calls. In addition, teams will be asked to provide a brief written report on their strategies and measures one month before the workshop based on a template (TBD). Each team will be expected to provide written peer reviews of two other IL team reports before the workshop. As a result, all teams will arrive at the workshop familiar with the work of the other teams and ready to assist and receive comment.

We understand that IL plans are currently at different starting points. We also understand that each team is addressing several objectives through a number of strategic actions. The goal is to work through a few types of objectives/strategies that all or most of the teams have in common, allowing the most constructive peer review. We believe that Teams will then have the experience to continue completion of their plans independently. Budgets willing, we hope to convene future meetings on conservation themes in common across ILs including such topics as diadromous fish and energy sprawl.

Workshop Desired Outcomes:

- Improved conservation strategies of landscape-scale projects using peer review;
- Opportunity for project teams to share and explore common challenges, opportunities, lessons learned and innovative approaches;
- Teams adopt and use best practices for landscape-scale CAPs;
- Emerging cross-boundary conservation strategies are identified that require implementation or coordination beyond a single landscape.

Expectations of Participating Teams:

- Teams will be asked to participate in regularly scheduled WebEx calls that focus on specific topics related to strategy development and measures. The purpose of these calls will be to provide coaching on planning methods and tools as well as intermediate peer review on each team's progress leading up to the workshop. Teams will be asked to do homework assignments between calls.
- Teams are advised to follow the basic foundation of a CAP, including definition of the project's scope and boundary, identification of targets and evaluation of threats (see below). The teams will need to be prepared to answer questions about scope, targets and threats as they pertain to strategy development.

However, these components of the plan will not be emphasized in the peer review as the focus of the workshop will be primarily on strategies and measures.

- Teams will be asked to provide a written report one month before the workshop based on a template (TBD) that will articulate the team's vision statement and overarching goals, 2-3 well-developed priority strategies with results chains, a narrative theory of change, and associated objectives and indicators.
- Each team will be expected to provide written peer reviews of two other IL team reports before the workshop.
- Teams will attend workshop and present priority strategies and measures based on their written report incorporating written peer review where possible.
- Each team will be assigned a conservation coach to provide guidance and facilitation in preparing the team for the workshop.

Conservation Action Planning Guidance

Landscape teams have asked many questions about the degree and depth of Conservation Action Planning needed or required to produce good conservation plans at the IL scale. While none of this is strictly prescriptive, for the Peer Review Workshops planned during 2010, teams should follow the general outline provided below.

Teams should develop sufficient information necessary to ensure that team members, sponsors, others in the Division, and peer reviewers have a fundamental understanding of the vision for conservation in the landscape, the rationale for proposed conservation strategies, and clear benchmarks of progress for implementation. This information should include:

1. Description of project's vision, scope and boundary, and identification of a finite number of targets relevant at the scale of the landscape. A viability analysis is not necessary unless desired as a strategy implementation indicator;
2. Analysis (description or diagram) of the threats and situation that form the basis of strategies being pursued. This step, again at the discretion of the team, does not require a full threats analysis or complete identification and ranking of potential strategies;
3. Clear, quantitative, time-limited intermediate and long-term objectives for the strategies pursued;
4. Description of the strategic actions developed to address those objectives (prose or results chain that illustrates theory of change);
5. Identification of indicators measured to evaluate progress on the objectives.

Workshop Participants:

Attendance at the workshop for each team will be limited to the following:

- IL Team Lead plus two additional team members
- IL Team Sponsor
- IL Team Conservation Coach

In addition to the four teams, we will invite representatives from other ILs to serve as independent peer reviewers as space allows.