

Landscape-Based Conservation in the Southeast

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April 2013

The mission of the Department of Defense (DoD) is to provide the military forces necessary to deter war and to protect the security of our country. According to the [FY2012 DoD Strategic Sustainability Performance Plan](#), “To successfully execute the DoD mission, our military departments must have the energy, land, air and water resources necessary to train and operate, today and in the future, in a world where there is increasing competition for resources. Sustainability provides the framework necessary to ensure the longevity of these resources by addressing energy, environmental, safety, and occupational health considerations. Incorporating sustainability into DoD planning and decision-making enables us to address current and emerging mission needs and consider future challenges.”

What did the DoD need in the 1950s to train and operate? What does it need today? What will it need in 2050? What does the landscape look like, and how do military training requirements interface with, complement, and conflict with needs and requirements of private citizens and groups, state agencies and other federal entities? How can the DoD ensure it can achieve its mission, conserve fiscal resources, successfully demonstrate to outside entities that DoD is a responsible steward of the environment; that what the military is doing is not damaging the environment? Is there a way to cooperatively work towards landscapes that facilitate conservation of natural resources, while meeting organizational missions and public expectations?

The DoD currently partners with various federal, state, public and private organizations in its quest for sustainability. Similar to the DoD, each partner organization has a mission it strives to achieve. The U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) consists of conservation-based organizations including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), National Park Service (NPS) and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). The DOI's mission is to protect America's natural resources and heritage, to honor our cultures and tribal communities, and supply the energy to power our future. [The mission of the USFWS is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people; The NPS preserves unimpaired, the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The NPS cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout the US and around the world. The USGS mission is to serve the Nation by providing reliable scientific information to describe and understand the Earth; minimize loss of life and property from natural disasters; manage water, biological, energy and mineral resources; and enhance and protect Americans' quality of life.] Apart from the DOI, the mission of the Environmental Protection Agency is to protect human health and the environment. The Forest Service strives to achieve quality land management under the sustainable multiple-use

management concept to meet the diverse needs of people. Many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are concerned with the preservation of natural and cultural resources and are; therefore, ideal sustainability partners. For example, the mission statement of the Nature Conservancy is to conserve the lands upon which all life depends. There are multiple NGOs with similar missions having local, regional and national focus. Individual states also play a key role in conservation. The mission statement of the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources is to protect North Carolina's environment and natural resources; common for many state regulatory agencies throughout the US.

The conservation challenges of the 21st Century are more complex than ever before. Local and widespread threats such as drought, climate change and large-scale habitat fragmentation are complex issues that complicate efforts to plan and conduct conservation. These complex threats not only simultaneously impact isolated places or individual species, but entire landscapes and multiple resources. Because these challenges are too large for any single organization to meet alone, addressing landscape-scale issues will require a combined, consistent and collaborative effort, among the many stakeholders, to include public - private partnerships.

In 2010, 22 [Landscape Conservation Cooperatives](#) (LCCs) were formed by the DOI as a network of public-private partnerships that provide shared science to ensure the sustainability of America's land, water, wildlife and cultural resources. The LCCs offer a forum for States, Tribes, Federal agencies, NGOs, universities and other groups to work together in new ways. These applied conservation science partnerships serve two main functions, the first of which is to provide the science and technical expertise needed to support conservation planning at landscape scales – beyond the reach or resources of any one organization. Through the efforts of in-house staff and science-oriented partners, LCCs generate the tools, methods and data that managers need to design and deliver conservation under an adaptive management approach. The second function of LCCs is to promote collaboration among members to define shared conservation goals. With these objectives in mind, partners can identify where and how to take action, within organizational authorities and priorities, to best contribute to the larger conservation effort. LCCs do not place limits on partners; they enable and encourage partners to see how activities can mesh with those of other partners, thus achieve a larger, more lasting impact. (Read more [here](#).)

Formation and development of shared landscape-level conservation goals and strategies that are based upon a shared scientific understanding of the landscape, to include implications of current and future environmental stressors, are fundamental to the success of LCCs. A common approach is the development of a “blueprint” for conservation, which provides a framework for decisions, investments, research and implementation of projects for conservation initiatives. Cooperative conservation through coordinated efforts can create synergy among agencies that might otherwise work in “stovepipes,” while increasing the efficacy of conservation funding by preventing duplication of efforts and sharing of science. Such sharing creates a broader foundation of knowledge upon which new projects and initiatives are built and targeted, and can quickly advance or enhance the depth of science and conservation activities. Without a

model that allows individual organizational flexibility, while informing and creating collaborative opportunities, scarce and diminishing conservation resources cannot be as effectively utilized.

REEO-S is chairing the South Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative ([SALCC](#)) for FY 13/14, and Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GADNR) is the vice-chairman. The mission statement of the SALCC:

Create a shared blueprint for landscape conservation actions that sustain natural and cultural resources by:

- ✓ *Facilitating an inclusive and cross-jurisdictional collaborative for landscape conservation planning and action*
 - ✓ *Linking broad-based efforts to create a shared conservation blueprint for South Atlantic partners*
 - ✓ *Identifying and filling the research gaps of the partners that enable creation of the blueprint*
 - ✓ *Working across jurisdictional boundaries at new and larger temporal and spatial scales*
 - ✓ *Using an interdisciplinary approach that addresses the interconnectedness of systems and society*
 - ✓ *Focusing on protection, maintenance and restoration of healthy ecosystems on a landscape basis*
 - ✓ *Building resilience into ecological systems for long-term sustainability by anticipating future change*
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The SALCC is currently working with all of the aforementioned organizations, as well as private partners and several established partnerships familiar to the DoD. These include the Southeast Natural Resource Leaders Group (SENRLG), the Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability (SERPPAS), the North Carolina Interagency Leadership Team and others. Throughout the U.S., other LCCs are engaging partners to develop landscape conservation priorities, goals and initiatives. Only through landscape and regional scale conservation efforts that are supported and implemented by multiple partners, can resources be preserved and allowed to recover and thrive in the face of increasing threats.