



# **California Landscape Conservation Cooperative**

## **Strategic Planning Process Phase I Summary Report**

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Prepared for: CA LCC Steering Committee**

## 1. Introduction

The California Landscape Conservation Cooperative (CA LCC) strategic planning process is a multi-phase effort to define the focus of CA LCC resources and activities, and implementation to maximize conservation benefits across the LCC. The first phase of the strategic planning process began in fall 2011 and findings of that effort are presented here.

For Phase I, CA LCC staff met with partner organizations to assess their objectives and interests and the ways the CA LCC may assist them (described in *Section 2 – Phase I Process* below). Upon approval by the Steering Committee, Phase II in this initial planning process (January – February 2012) will include surveying representative resource managers and members of the CA LCC Steering Committee to similarly assess their conservation objectives and technical needs. Results of Phase I and II will be communicated to the broader CA LCC Alliance to gather feedback about the proposed conservation objectives. The CA LCC Steering Committee is the ultimate decision-making group on the strategic planning approach and direction. An overall strategic plan is expected to be completed by summer 2012.

Consistent with the CA LCC mission and goals, activities of the CA LCC will aim to influence and improve the state of conservation each year. Inherent in this is the expectation that the focus of activities in each year will lay the ground work for improved conditions in the following years. Establishing our measures of success as soon as possible will be critical to direct our activities over time. To ensure a strategic approach, the CA LCC will identify annual alternatives or “workflow plans” comprised of explicit actions to be implemented toward these measures of success. This will enable the CA LCC to be responsive to changing conditions while working toward explicit conservation objectives.

## 2. Phase I Process

In October and November 2011, CA LCC staff interviewed representatives from the following conservation partnerships:

- Bay Area Ecosystem Climate Change Consortium
- California Fire Science Consortium
- California Habitat Conservation Planning Coalition
- California Rangeland Conservation Coalition
- Central Valley Joint Venture
- San Francisco Bay Joint Venture
- Sonoran Joint Venture
- Southern Sierra Conservation Cooperative
- Southern Sierra Partnership

Collectively, 17 representatives participated in these interviews. In advance of each interview, staff reviewed the goals, objectives, membership, etc. of each partnership. Using a standard set of questions (see Attachment A), staff discussed the needs and objectives of each partnership with the representatives and how the CA LCC can help these partners and their respective members be successful. The intended outcome of these interviews was to identify common themes and trends among these partnerships regarding their needs, as well as any unique conditions that might also warrant support from the CA LCC.

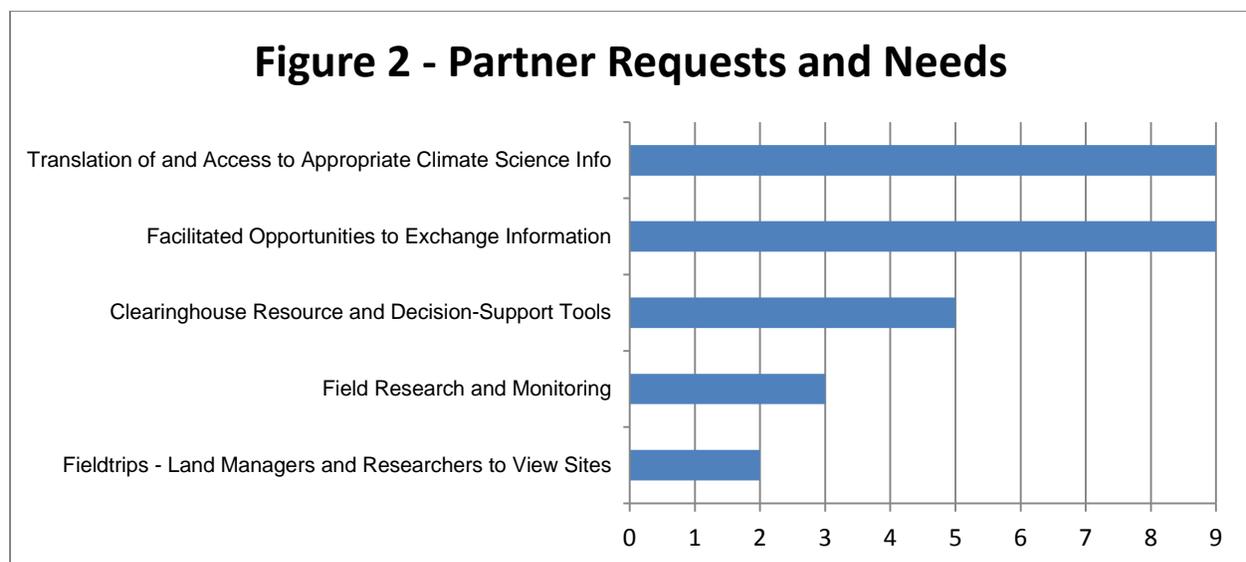
### 3. Findings

This section presents findings and responses from the nine interviews CA LCC conducted. The standard questionnaire was structured under three categories of questions, each category including two or more related questions. These categories were:

- Conservation Objectives
- Management Actions and Decisions
- Information Exchange

In the following section, common themes and differences among partners are reported in summary form. Interviewees did not necessarily respond to each question and the findings are not quantified statistically. Rather, responses are aggregated and emphasis is given to topics reflecting common interests and perspectives of the interviewees or conversely, a lack of any common perspectives. The following summary describes these common (or uncommon) perspectives in “qualitative” terms (e.g. “a majority of participants said “X,” “a small minority of participants believe “Y”).

The overriding theme that emerged from each interview and across all categories of questions was the need and desire of partnerships to increase effectiveness of conservation by bridging the gap between science and management through improved communication and information exchange among LCC partners. While this theme was expressed in different individual statements, when taken as a collection of insights, a majority of interviewees stated that CA LCC can play a critical role in communicating science and information among researchers and resource managers across the LCC. Figure 2 below presents an illustration of the most common interview response themes. The vertical axis represents a summary of common themes. The horizontal axis represents the number of partnerships interviewed and the number of times a theme was mentioned.



In the following sections, references to these themes are presented in **bold underlined** text to best reflect the common manner in which the topic came up. At the end of this section is a brief summary of partner comments about how they currently exchange information and set objectives.

### *Translation of and Access to Appropriate Climate Science Information*

As reflected in Figure 2 above, all partners articulated the **need to have better access to climate change information**. In addition, they identified a **need to translate climate change models and make them relevant to their decision-making**. Many interviewees recognized that many current models and tools do not necessarily meet the spatial or temporal needs of resource managers regarding individual sites or projects.

Access to conservation and research effort information was often heard. A common statement was a request for **access to information about conservation efforts and research across the landscape**.

Numerous partners stated a desire to have CA LCC **help communicate appropriate research to resource managers**. Partners also expressed desire for CA LCC to **communicate a broader public message about the value of landscape-scale of conservation efforts**.

### *Facilitated Opportunities to Exchange Information*

Under this common theme, a couple subthemes were raised several times in various interviews, these subthemes include:

- Communication methods to exchange information (e.g. web-based meetings)
- Outreach methods to exchange information (e.g. workshops)

A majority of interviewees stated that CA LCC can **play a critical role in communicating science and information among researchers and resource managers**, and can **use technology like webinars and conference calls to support information exchange** among partners. Two partners also offered assistance to help CA LCC communicate information and facilitate the CA LCC's conservation objectives.

Many interviewees spoke about their ability to bring resource managers and researchers together, as well as their need to **provide reliable and relevant information to groups**, as a way to achieve their organization's conservation objectives. Many partners use the number of completed conservation projects as a metric to determine their success in achieving conservation objectives.

When asked about constraints to achieve their objectives, interviewees pointed to insufficient funds and the lack of baseline data about the location and condition of habitats. The partners stated that the lack of funds and constrained schedules prevent individuals from participating in traditional planning or informational meetings. Partners said that possible alleviators to those constraints include CA LCC **facilitating opportunities for groups to exchange information**.

A minority of partners raised the need to engage non-conservation oriented groups and to build interest in non-local conservation efforts. One interviewee said that CA LCC can collaborate with non-conservation organizations, like the American Lung Association or economic groups, to **expand the range of audiences receiving information about climate change impacts and conservation efforts in California**. The interviewee further stated that as the CA LCC broadens its conservation messages, this work will likely not compete with on-the-ground conservation efforts. A few partners share this concern that CA LCC may duplicate existing groups' partnership or conservation efforts and expressed interest in finding ways to avoid that.

### *Clearinghouse Resource and Decision-Support Tools*

When asked how information exchange could be improved, a little more than half of the partners used the words “**information clearinghouse**” or “**central resource**” in regards to their need for conservation information and research, as well as **mentioned a need for decision-support tools**.

### *Field Research and Monitoring*

Some partners stated that they work to **conduct field research and monitor habitat conditions and species populations**. A few interviewees requested the CA LCC provide assistance with these efforts.

### *Fieldtrips*

Two groups also stated that their efforts to bring federal, state, local, science, and business representatives to specific project or habitat sites have improved conservation efforts and research. These partners believe the **fieldtrips are critical opportunities to facilitate dialogue among researchers and resource managers**.

### *Current Methods to Exchange Information and Set Objectives*

Most partners stated that they used committees or working groups composed of both resource managers and scientists to determine their conservation objectives. When asked for specific examples of their conservation objectives, interviewees responded that they facilitate financial, research and/or political and public support to help groups complete projects.

Additionally all partners already use technology like listserves, conference calls, webinars, websites and databases to access and share conservation and climate change information with their groups. A minority of partners stated they use their external relationships and organizational contacts to access additional information.

## **4. Phase 1 Conclusions**

The Phase I results emphasized that conservation specialists need significant support to better access, assess, and share pertinent information that will influence conservation research and management decisions.

**Staff has concluded and recommends that the focus of 2012 be on CA LCC's unique role of improving science delivery across partners to increase effectiveness of conservation by bridging the gap between science and management.**

## **5. Next Steps**

An immediate need is to define measures of success for the CA LCC, providing a way to evaluate the effectiveness of CA LCC actions in terms of the derived conservation benefits. With these measures in

hand, the Strategic Planning Subcommittee can recommend an annual alternative (or workflow plan) that is expected to reap the greatest conservation benefit. The selected alternative for 2012 will specify decisions about staffing and allocation of staff time and resources among a range of activities so that CA LCC will effectively respond to partner requests in ways that include but are not limited to workshops, tool application, and web development.

As described above in Section 2, in Phase II CA LCC staff will conduct interviews with representative resource managers and Steering Committee members in early 2012. Staff expects that these interviews will broaden the CA LCC understanding of the diverse, complimentary, and potentially conflicting needs among partnerships, researchers, and applied resource managers. The CA LCC will adapt as we learn what works and does not work in the areas of communication, resource management, research, and monitoring while moving towards explicit conservation objectives.

## **Attachment A**

### **Questions for Management Partners**

The general question is, “**What can the California Landscape Conservation Cooperative do to help and support science and management partners?**” Within this context, the below questions will be asked.

#### **Conservation Objectives**

*We understand these as your conservation objectives. Are these correct? What is the scale (temporal and spatial) for these objectives?*

1. How have your conservation objectives been identified (e.g., organizational mission, stakeholder elicitation process, legal mandates, regulations)? *(How were these objectives informed by resource managers? How were these informed by scientists?)*
2. Do your conservation objectives intersect with those of other organizations/partnerships? If yes, how and with whom?

*What are your Conservation Objectives?*

*What are your objectives for the CA LCC?*

#### **Management Actions/Decisions**

3. What actions are being taken by your organization and/or management partners to achieve conservation objectives identified above? *We want to know the on-the-ground actions like restoration activities, land acquisition, easements, etc.*

4. Is your organization/partnership allocating resources to address climate change and other landscape stressors? If so, how are decisions being made to allocate your organization’s resources (e.g. qualitatively, quantitative tools, scientific literature)? *Do you need tools to assist with this? What’s preventing you from using existing decision support tools?*

5. What have been some of the biggest successes in achieving your objectives? How did your organization accomplish these? What indicators are you using to measure your success in achieving your objectives?

6. What have been your biggest constraints to achieving your objectives, and how might these constraints be alleviated??

7. What information about landscape-scale changes in the environment (e.g., atmospheric, urbanization, invasive species) would help you in designing your management actions? *(scale, what’s preventing you from getting that information?)*

#### **Information Exchange**

8. How does information exchange between science specialists and your organization or management partners currently take place (e.g., regular meetings, facilitated workshops, phone calls, online)?

9. What types of information exchange work best and why? *(ask for specific examples)*

10. How can the exchange of information be improved to better facilitate conservation decision making?  
*(What's preventing the ideal information exchange?)*

11. What can the CA LCC do to connect efforts among organizations (including your own) to work toward conservation objectives more effectively at a broader scale?

*12. What question have we not asked?*

*13. What tools can we provide?*