



SWAP Learning Series #6

Considering Landscape Conservation

Date: May 17, 2023

Time: 2:00pm-3:30pm (ET)

Meeting Link: <https://fishwildlife-org.zoom.us/j/83229130096?pwd=Y0JGU0xMNkRrYm1Lb1hLL3ZWdzVuZz09>

Meeting ID: 832 2913 0096

Passcode: 591829

One tap mobile: +13017158592,,83229130096#,,,,*591829# US (Washington DC)
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Overview: Over the past several decades new tools, policies, capacity, and partnerships have arrived on the scene to advance landscape conservation and support State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAPs). The AFWA [SWAP and Landscape Conservation Framework](#) was adopted in September 2021 to assist states with SWAP revision. Ken Elowe, a thought leader on landscape conservation for decades, serves as AFWA’s landscape conservation coordinator where he staffs the AFWA/FWS Landscape Conservation Joint Task Force and supports regional landscape collaboratives. Brian Hess helps to lead efforts to coordinate SWAP development and implementation in the Northeast at a regional scale and Andrew Milliken serves as the coordinator for the NEAFWA Landscape Conservation Wildlife Committee which provides leadership and direction on large-scale landscape conservation in the Northeast. During this session Ken, Brian and Andrew will present ideas on national and regional landscape conservation efforts that can support the SWAP revision process in your state.

MEETING AGENDA

Time (ET)	Topic	Speakers
2:00 PM	Welcome and Introduction	Mark Humpert, AFWA and Jason Goldberg, USFWS
2:05 PM	Plenary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of Landscape Conservation and SWAPs (10 min) • Landscape Conservation and SWAPs in the Northeast- A Case Study (20 min) 	Ken Elowe (AFWA/FWS) Andrew Milliken (FWS) and Brian Hess (CT DEEP)
2:35 PM	Q&A	
2:45 PM	Breakout Groups (see below)	Group leaders to be self-selected, panelists will be dispersed among groups
3:15 PM	Group Report-outs & Discussion	Each group will share points discussed during their breakout

3:30 PM	Wrap up and adjourn	Reporters send reports to jason_goldberg@fws.gov .
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Overview of Landscape Conservation and SWAPs

- (No presentation.)
- We often think of species conservation and landscape conservation as different silos, but we have a need to combine these efforts as they contribute to the same thing.
- We know the future of fish and wildlife depends on landscape conservation and providing connected habitats across large ranges.
 - FWS and AFWA produced a [report](#) in 2020 on Shared Science FWS and AFWA produced a report in 2020 on Shared Science and Landscape Conservation priorities. It named three legs of a stool to do to do conservation at large scales. Sharing conservation priorities. SWAPs work across jurisdictions.
 - Sharing science on those species.
 - Durable structures that will allow us to coordinate work across jurisdictions.
- In late 2021, FWS and the States signed a Charter creating Landscape Conservation Joint Task Force.
 - Designed to help build trust and bind states and FWS together as a unified front for large-scale conservation.
 - Also sought to remove barriers. Collaborative landscape conservation requires bringing together a lot of agencies and personalities.
 - Support structures evolving in Regional Associations.
- AFWA Regions are key. This isn't a national effort, recognizes that work happens at regional scale. That's where people are closest to the conservation issues, but a large enough geography to support landscape function.
- Where we can help regional collaboratives be helpful?
 - Connect national conservation investments to people who know what the priorities are. For example, we're working to connect NFWF and America the Beautiful with regional high-landscape conservation priorities. Trying to funnel funding to priorities the Region said are important.
- We all know we need to provide large landscape-scale conservation. But we know it's complex.
 - What are we managing the landscape for? What's our responsibility?
 - Species are our foundational metric – they tell us how much, what kind, and in what configuration habitats need to be conserved – species help us design a landscape. Impossible otherwise
- The SWAPs are identifying vulnerable species.
- Doing collaborative landscape conservation takes a lot of horsepower to keep people working on landscape design and long-term implementation. But at-risk and SGCN species are catalysts for bringing people to the table and stimulating long-term engagement, because some people want to protect the species and some perceive it as having an impact on their desired activities.
- Example – Partners came together and landscape designs have been developed to address sage grouse – over 300 other species brought under that umbrella.
- We hope to bring together SWAPs and landscape / species – we NEED catalyst species to sustain landscape conservation efforts, and SGCN species conservation cannot be successful without landscape conservation – these are 2 essential parts of conservation that cannot be successful separately.

- Link to Regional Landscape Conservation Priorities
https://www.fishwildlife.org/application/files/3016/8009/7854/Regional_Landscape_Conservation-final.pdf

Landscape Conservation and SWAPs in the Northeast- A Case Study

Brian Hess

- Will organize talk around SWAP Guiding Principles.
 - Need to think about who is doing work, and what structures need to be in place to accomplish goals.
- The Northeast is working on an iterative process with 30-40 years of work underneath it. Different states may need different techniques or apply different tactics, or take different routes.
- 1980s – First work to develop nongame species management.
- 1999 – First triage efforts to prevent at-risk species.
- More robust regional conservation needs identified over time.
- NEAFWA oversees pooled State Wildlife Grant funding to address projects of regional conservation interests.
- 2015 – New SWAPs. We needed to understand current species status, and work to help develop shared approaches.
 - 2013 Regional Conservation Synthesis was developed, combined with other efforts to help develop shared priorities.
 - One project, for example, was development of a common lexicon.
 - Goal was to provide States flexibility, but still providing consistency and allow States to leverage work that had already been done.
- 2017 – SWAP database developed allowing for SGCN status to be found, threats to species. Projects identified through NEAFWA.
- Goal is to help SWAPs be foundation of landscape conservation.
- 2021 – Addition of SWAP Coordinators’ Subcommittee.
- This process is iterative.
- www.northeastwildlifediversity.org/Projects
- Upcoming projects include updating RGSCN, updating Lexicon, completing Regional synthesis, identifying conservation status of habitats, and completing NE SWAP Database. Each product will build on the next.
- Each project builds on SWAPs Guiding Principles.
- Consistent Regional communication has been very important.

Andrew Milliken – Links between SWAPs and AFWA Regional landscape conservation

- Effectively implementing SWAPs at scale and with resources the species need requires all state F&W agencies in each Region, USFWS, and other key partners for responsibility for their habitats.
- Each of the four AFWA Regions has its own regional landscape efforts underway.
- In Northeast, NEAFWA is working to share priorities, including SGCNs
- RSGCNs are at the foundation of collaborative work.
- Also builds on efforts across FWS programs working across the Region – At-risk species teams, coastal resilience, aquatic connectivity, and more.
- Work relies on alignment in RSGCNS and At-risk species, landscape and watershed scale partnerships, and development of regional tools.
- Initial focus for NEAFWA Landscape Committee focuses on inventory and organizing projects, partners, partnerships, identifying potential funding, identifying landscape needs, and more.

- There is a broad network of partners that has come together to address priorities.
- A set of priority landscapes and themes was identified -initial list has been narrowed down to 7 to help focus efforts.
- Two broad landscapes are immediate focus – Atlantic Coast and Appalachian Corridor.
- Case study - Atlantic Coast
 - Management of coastal habitats to increase resiliency of coastal natural systems, habitats, species, and communities.
 - Species include species such as saltmarsh sparrow, marsh inverts, etc.
 - Numerous states and DC are part of the work.
 - Work responds to sea level rise and storms and other impacts.
 - Numerous saltmarsh restoration across several states.
- Next steps
 - Working to continue building on identification of landscapes.
 - Coordinating with watershed partnerships.
 - Share priorities and incorporate other partners
 - Identifying priority conservation planning and design needs.
 - Continue learning from and collaborating with MLI, SECAS, WAFWA
 - Developing landscape information in support of and in alignment with the next round of SWAPs.
- Key takeaways
 - SWAPs and Regional Species of Greatest Conservation Need are foundational to landscape conservation.
 - Using regionally consistent information is important.
 - Pooling SWG funds have been critical to supporting regional conservation.
 - Collaborative landscape conservation is critical.
 - AFWA and associated regional leadership is important.

Discussion

- Can you elaborate on the difference between "pooled swg funding" and cSWG applications?
 - RCN pooled funding has helped some cSWG be more competitive. There are some similar mechanisms, but it's a different pool.
 - If allocated from feds to the s
 - Pooled funding is from the Apportioned SWG funds, 4% of each state's apportionment. the 4% is put into grants. the grants set up an administrative structure with NEAFWA and WMI as fiscal agent.
 - rcngrants.org
 - Competitive SWG is a separate NOFO each year.
 - There are been several updated methodologies through the years.
 - **(Update response?)**
- Every Region is doing something similar to the Northeast.

Breakout 1 (Janet Gorrell)

- Moving Westward, the states get large. Organizing regional approaches and admin hurdles we might, including match commitments that need to be met in state.
- Has Northeast group dedicated capacity for developing shared projects and proposals. Stitching proposals together could be very helpful.

- Can SWAPs be organized around HUCs or something else to improve searching?
- Scalability is critical.

Breakout 2 (Lilly Cervantes)

- A significant barrier is capacity, which can come from funding, but also difficulty in seeing something through. Someone needs to lead this effort, especially with so many different initiatives. It can be challenging to combine efforts and plug in. That's both a capacity and leadership issue.

Breakout 3 (Mark Humpert)

- In the NE, blueprint will be integrated. Massachusetts is working to develop priorities.
- MLI Blueprint is not yet finalized.
- In the West, no Blueprint yet but states are working on coordination.
- Capacity is an issue, especially with grants coming down the pike. It takes as much work to manage a small grant as a large one.
- MLI is working to help incorporate SWAPs into landscape conservation.

Breakout 4 (Stephanie Graham – Notes below)

- Ditto what was said up above.
- Northeast is finding an invertebrate coordinator to help address capacity.
- Private lands collaboration can be a challenge on landscape-scale initiatives.
- Sometimes funding from federal agencies is very state oriented, but maybe it can be bigger and broader.
- Everyone is on a different timeline.
- Some groups are still developing their Blueprints.

Breakout Session: Participants will be split into virtual groups of ~8-10 individuals each. Panelists will be distributed among breakout groups, but they are acting only as participants (not group leaders). Please self-select a breakout leader. Small groups will spend ~3 minutes silently reflecting on the discussion questions provided and then, using a round robin, answer the following:

Breakout Group Questions:

1. Are you using (or if you are) how are you using the landscape conservation blueprint in your region to support landscape conservation in your SWAP.
 2. What are the barriers and solutions for addressing landscape conservation in your SWAP (i.e. working with partners; available science; leadership support; capacity)
 3. How are you incorporating the regional landscape conservation priorities into your SWAP?
- One or several people from the breakout group should be prepared to provide highlights from the breakout session. Please include notes on challenges and opportunities, and any observations, in the chat or emailed to jason_goldberg@fws.gov. The opportunities identified during these breakout groups should be revisited and acted upon.

Breakout Group 1

- As you move west from NEAFWA states get much larger. MN has match funding that cannot be spent outside of the state, so there are structural limitations on the ability for states to work together similarly. How can we overcome this? We need to spend money in a more dynamic way. Ken indicated this isn't an uncommon restriction and some NE states have the same. Recommended looking at the work that could be done collaboratively but also in the state – prevent the redundancy of having every state start from scratch. Even signing on to multistate projects is an administrative burden for state federal aid folks, but the administrative work might be streamlined through the NEAFWA approach.
- Kieran suggested capitalizing on relationships with joint ventures and funding available to affect landscape conservation. To the match point above, some partner states MAY be able to distribute their match to other states where needed.
- Cathy (PA) voiced the utility in developing shared science, shared protocols, shared best practices, etc. The paperwork is real – it's great to share funding but takes a lot of effort with USFWS to simplify things. When you get into implementation across multiple states, compliance and reporting becomes complex. Still working through reducing complexity, but with regional collaboratives, when they articulated regional priorities, they set the stage for getting some of the federal investment delivered at the state level. Some breakthroughs in shared projects across states ranking as one, rather than being competitive between states.
- Question about dedicated capacity and stitching things together – it's a nut that NEAFWA hasn't been able to quite crack. Part of the NEAFWA funds do go to a common consultant to help with things. WMI helps on the fiscal side. As far as shepherding projects and proposals along from concept to implementation does fall to the state reps in the groups.
- Landscapes within states – WV organized by ecoregion, high priority areas encapsulated in HUCs. VA uses state planning units (political). Units should be able to be rolled up or down. WV is in the Appalachian priority area for the **joint** venture. Frame in a way that can be both meaningfully scaled AND get to effective on the ground action. Are there good examples and how are they tangibly working in those states? Scale it at the implementation scale a state/partner might be working at. Ability to scale is really the necessary component.

Breakout Group 2

1. Are you using (or if you are) how are you using the landscape conservation blueprint in your region to support landscape conservation in your SWAP.
 - Not quite sure how it is being used. Knows that it is in the works but cannot contribute much information regarding the details.
 - Presenter touched on much of what is being done in their region
 - In the west, the landscape priorities are not being used too well. The SWAP in 2015 was limited at the time due to lack of capacity. Montana hired a new coordinator to lead the revision effort and shift to a landscape scale view.
2. What are the barriers and solutions for addressing landscape conservation in your SWAP (i.e. working with partners; available science; leadership support; capacity)

- Barriers and capacity issues come from funding. It can also be a challenge to see something through with partners. Working together to make it happen can be the solution.
 - Capacity is a big issue and having someone to lead the effort in the west. There are many orgs working on conservation at the landscape level. It is hard to combine those regional efforts/collaborate. Don't want to start over but also it is a challenge to plug in. Could either be a capacity issue or a leadership issue.
 - Everyone has different initiatives/projects/priorities. It is a lot to put in when everyone is doing something different a different way.
3. How are you incorporating the regional landscape conservation priorities into your SWAP.
- At a point where they are hoping to do this in MT in their new SWAP, but it is not something they have done in the past. It is in the works.
 - Some uncertainty about this as many people in the groups are new to SWAPs.

Breakout Group 4

1. Are you using (or if you are) how are you using the landscape conservation blueprint in your region to support landscape conservation in your SWAP.

- Utah - Doing revisions and doing initial discussions with SW Region. Just developing our work. We have more landscape scale opportunities in our state.
- NC – We have SECAS nearby and they're very accessible. We're looking at the Blueprint and other GIS information that we have. Hoping to pull out what we're doing to identify conservation opportunity areas.
- SD – Not sure what the Conservation Blueprint we have is. We have a strong desire to include landscape planning and want to bring in more habitat staff. We aren't sure how to do it.
- MT – Not using the Blueprint yet. SWAP is undergoing a major revision, we're hoping to add it.
- NH – It's a circular, adaptive question. In the NE, we developed a land cover layer that includes habitat, gets back to the lexicon.
- Recommendations on how the Committee works in the NE to help look across areas?
 - Diversity Technical Committee is working on these issues. We don't often get into SWAP specific conversations. One project we're working is recruiting a NE Pollinator Coordinator, we're combining resources to address that need given capacity.

2. What are the barriers and solutions for addressing landscape conservation in your SWAP (i.e. working with partners; available science; leadership support; capacity)

- One barrier – uncertain about what the priorities are.
- Barrier - Land in private ownership can be a barrier. Talking about landscapes, you have to think about components about what the landscape looks like.
- Barrier – Capacity. In NE, states are small with small staff. Lots of opportunities now with federal funds, but challenging for states to take advantage of those opportunities because of capacity to take on more work.
 - RCN mentioned as an example.
 - We need to build in project management capacity.

- Barrier in MW – Lack of common systems that can be crosswalked with regional efforts. Timing may not work with SWAP revisions.
- Barrier - Internal priorities not always tied to SGCNs, they may be connected to landowner interests in working with us. Focus can be on delivery to interested landowners.
- Barrier – A lot of different types.
- **Opportunity: It would be great if someone could help lead efforts to ensure States are communicating. Is this something the Regional Associations could support?**
 - For example, how do we get WAFWA to become more involved?
 - If each Regional Association developed priorities, so who's leading that?
- Opportunity – Having consistent SGCNs, etc. would help. Regional groups need to address regional priorities – maybe that's something we can do in the West, perhaps divided into different sections.
 - Maybe this is a place where FWS can also assist? **Can FWS offer funding intentionally designed to work across borders?**

3. How are you incorporating the regional landscape conservation priorities into your SWAP?

- If focused on the recently released priorities, probably not. They're new and were just identified. But we have other priorities we've been working on.
- Regional SGCN lists are also important.
- RSGCN

Past & Future SWAP Learning Series (Tentative Schedule)

Date*	Topic (w/Recording Link)	Recording Password	Link to Notes
Wednesday, November 16, 2022	#1 Engaging Tribes and Indigenous People in State Wildlife Action Plans	0T?41Gz.	SWAP & Tribal Engagement Notes
Wednesday, December 14, 2022	#2 SWAPs and Climate Adaptation Guidance	XU.=69*j	SWAP & Climate Adaptation Notes
Wednesday, January 18, 2023	#3 State Wildlife Action Plans and Renewable Energy	=7NSqgQT	SWAP & Renewable Energy Notes
Wednesday, March 15, 2023	#4 Interactive data and tools for SWAP planning and implementation	+6@f9jQW	SWAP & NatureServe Notes
Wednesday, April 19, 2023	#5 Engaging Diverse Partners & Making your SWAP More Relevant	\$p?=!g95	SWAP & Engaging Diverse Partners Notes
Wednesday, May 17, 2023	#6 Using the SWAP & Landscape Conservation Framework for Interjurisdictional Landscape Conservation		
Wednesday, June 21, 2023	#7 Making Your SWAP RAWA-Ready		
Wednesday, July 19, 2023	#8 Incorporating corridors into your SWAP		
Wednesday, August 16, 2023	# 9 Connecting federal planning efforts into SWAP (NWRS, USFS, BLM)		
Wednesday, September 20, 2023	#10 Incorporating Fish & Wildlife Health and One Health into your SWAP		
October	Tentative Topic-Bat Conservation		
November	Topic TBD		
December	Tentative Topic-2023 Round-up on Lessons Learned		

* Note all SWAP Learning Series meetings will be held from 2:00pm-3:30pm ET unless otherwise indicated.