

Governance Document for the Desert Landscape Conservation Cooperative

[Draft date: September 23, 2011]

Introduction

The Desert Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC) is a self-directed, non-regulatory regional partnership formed and directed by resource management entities as well as interested public and private entities in the Mojave, Sonoran, and Chihuahuan Desert regions of the southwestern United States and northern Mexico. The Desert LCC, one of the 21 LCCs created pursuant to Secretarial Order 3289 to address the impacts of climate change on America's water, land and other natural and cultural resources, is focused on acquiring and sharing information to support the development of landscape level strategies for understanding and responding to climate change impacts and other large scale ecosystem stressors such as land use change, invasive species, wildfire and drought.

This document outlines the mission and goals of the Desert LCC along with its governance structure. Separate Operations and Annual Work Plans detail strategies for meeting the goals, key partnerships, monitoring measures, tasks, and timelines.

Mission Statement

Through collaborative partnerships provide scientific and technical support, coordination, and communication to resource managers to address climate change and other landscape-scale ecosystem stressors.

Desert LCC Goals

Support, facilitate, promote and add value to landscape scale conservation to build resource resilience in the face of climate change and other ecosystem stressors through the following:

- **Science Development and Delivery**
- **Collaboration and Communication**
- **Monitoring and Evaluation**
- **Communication and Education**

1. Science Development and Delivery

Identify science needs of LCC partners related to climate change and ecosystem stressors at broad spatial scales, and facilitate the development, integration and application of scientific information (including decision support tools) that will inform resource management decisions.

2. Collaboration and Communication

Support, facilitate, promote and add value to existing conservation partnerships to enhance the ability of these partnerships to respond to climate change and other stressors and to integrate scientific information into resource management plans and conservation projects.

3. Monitoring and Evaluation

Provide expertise and opportunities to enhance and add value to climate change and other monitoring programs of various partners through such activities as coordinated data collection, data analysis and information management, and data dissemination, when such actions are mutually agreed to by the partners involved.

4. Outreach and Education

Provide communication and application tools that educate and inform resource managers and the public about the effects of climate change and ecosystem stressors.

Structure and Participation

Participation in the Desert LCC may include involvement as a Steering Committee member, on a working group, on a sub-committee, or as a partner, as described below.

1. Steering Committee

a. Functions of the Steering Committee are to:

- Serve as the executive body for decision making to accomplish the Desert LCC mission.
- Develop vision, goals and priorities of the Desert LCC.
- Provide and promote communication, coordination, and collaboration on Desert LCC activities and functions.
- Provide leadership, direction and guidance to the Desert LCC Coordinator, Science Coordinator and staff.
- Approve the Operational Plan, Governance Document, Annual Work Plans and Reports, coordinated budgets and budget requests, and any other documents relating to the operation of the LCC.
- Identify partners to contribute and participate in the Desert LCC. Approve additional Steering committee members.

b. Steering Committee Composition Criteria

The Desert LCC Steering Committee consists of representatives from federal, state, tribal and non-governmental entities that work on landscape conservation in the area encompassed by the Desert LCC. The Steering Committee has the discretion to add members. New members must be approved by consensus of the Steering Committee. Steering Committee representatives shall, collectively, have the following characteristics:

- Jurisdictional responsibility for or actively engaged in natural and/or cultural resources management on a landscape-scale.
- Direct links and communication with other conservation entities or land managers involved in conservation delivery, particularly those operating at local levels.
- Capacity for furthering the vision and mission of the Desert LCC.
- Represent a diverse set of interests and trust responsibilities.
- Represent the entire geographical scope of the Desert LCC.

c. Individual Steering Committee Member Roles

Individual members of the Desert LCC Steering Committee are executive and management level representatives. Steering Committee members must be able to make decision on behalf of their entities and, as appropriate, commit resources to ensure the successful implementation of LCC priorities. And finally, Steering Committee members must be willing to hear diverse perspectives and be inclusive of others' ideas.

d. Steering Committee Operations

Activities of the Steering Committee will be led by the Chair and Vice Chair.

Chair and Vice Chair of the Steering Committee – The Steering Committee shall select a Chair and Vice Chair. The first Chair and Vice Chair will serve in that position for one year. Each year following, the Vice Chair will succeed the Chair and a new Vice Chair will be selected for a two year term (one year as Vice Chair and a one year as Chair). Reasonable effort will be made to rotate the Chair and Vice Chair positions among Federal, Tribal, State, and Non-governmental entities. Selection will be made by consensus.

Primary and Alternate Steering Committee Members – Each Steering Committee member may name one primary and one alternate representative or designated staff authorized to represent the entity on Desert LCC matters while maintaining the integrity of decision making.

e. Meetings and Communication

The Steering Committee will meet at least twice per year (meetings may be “virtual”). Additional meetings may be called by the Chair and Co-Chair, and additional business may be

conducted by e-mail, teleconference and web conference. Meetings will be scheduled each fall and spring.

Effective communication among the Steering Committee and the wider LCC community is vital to the success of the Desert LCC. Interpretation services at meetings and written information may be provided in both English and Spanish, as determined appropriate by the Steering Committee.

Steering Committee decisions and recommendations will be reached through consensus and every effort will be made to reach consensus by discussing issues thoroughly. Consensus for the Desert LCC is defined as a proposed solution or decision that participants can support or abide by and to which they do not formally object. Participants in the Desert LCC agree to make decisions by consensus of all members present at the time of decision; members who are unable to attend a meeting may designate a proxy to represent their views. If consensus cannot be reached, the Steering Committee will identify a mechanism for conflict resolution.

2. Working Groups

The Desert LCC Working Groups for Administration, Science, and GIS and Data Management are standing working teams, with the Administrative Working Group under the leadership and coordination of the LCC Coordinator and the Science and GIS and Data Management Working Groups under the leadership and coordination of the Science Coordinator. Working Group participation is based on recommendation from the Steering Committee but with explicit approval from the respective parent entity. The Working Groups develop foundational concepts, governance and operational documents, and provide specific recommendations to the Steering Committee on such tasks as the Annual Work Plan, Operations Plan and other formative and operative needs. The Working Groups also serve as Desert LCC “think tanks” to develop strategic concepts and analyze issues and other operative needs as identified by the Steering Committee under the leadership of the Coordinators.

The Administrative Working Group has the primary responsibility for proposing revisions to the Desert LCC Governance Document, as necessary, and for developing the Annual Work Plan and Annual Report.

The Science Working Group has the primary responsibility for developing and updating the Operations Plan and for coordinating input on science and information needs and initiatives and recommending priority needs to the Steering Committee.

The GIS and Data Management Working Group has the primary responsibility for identifying existing resources of GIS mapping and other data, and for developing a strategy for making data accessible to Desert LCC stakeholders.

The Steering Committee may establish sub-committees to assist with specific issues to facilitate decision making by the Steering Committee. For example, sub-committees may represent geographic regions (Mojave Desert, Chihuahuah Desert, Sonoran Desert, Mexico, and Colorado

and Rio Grande Rivers) or be issue-specific (communications, partnerships, etc). The sub-committees and their functions will be described in the Annual Work Plan.

3. Partners

Resource managers, stakeholders, communities and others engaged in or supporting natural and cultural resource conservation within the boundaries of the Desert LCC who would like to participate in the Desert LCC, but do not wish to participate on a working group, sub-committee, or as a Steering Committee member, may participate as a Desert LCC Partner.

4. Dedicated Personnel

LCC Coordinator – The Bureau of Reclamation agrees to dedicate a permanent employee to serve as the Desert LCC Coordinator. The LCC Coordinator works directly with the Steering Committee Chair to communicate with and receive direction from the Steering Committee. The LCC Coordinator is the primary point of contact between the Steering Committee and staff. Additionally, the LCC Coordinator implements, facilitates, and communicates Desert LCC vision and Steering Committee direction among the staff; and, at the direction of the Steering Committee, oversees the development and function of the Working Groups and any sub-committees. The Desert LCC Coordinator communicates and collaborates with adjacent LCC Coordinators to address transboundary issues that may arise during Desert LCC activities. LCCs adjacent to the Desert LCC include: California; Great Basin; Great Plains; Gulf Coast Prairie; and Southern Rockies LCCs.

Science Coordinator – The Fish and Wildlife Service agrees to dedicate a permanent employee to serve as the Desert LCC Science Coordinator. The Science Coordinator works in coordination with the LCC Coordinator and provides oversight and synthesis of Desert LCC science activities, products, and needs. The Science Coordinator provides leadership on all science-related issues and tracks and translates status and results of relevant science and research activities among the Desert LCC staff and users. The Science Coordinator also maintains contact with and supports the needs of the Working Groups and sub-committees.

Additional staff support and duties and responsibilities will be determined by the Steering Committee.