

Southern Rockies

Landscape Conservation Cooperative



Restored floodplain habitat in the Upper Colorado River Basin. / USFWS

Your Invitation . . .

Resource managers concerned with conservation of natural and cultural resources are faced with increasing management challenges such as land-use conversion, sensitive species protection and recovery, invasive species, water scarcity, and a range of other complex issues — all of which are amplified by climate change. In response, the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) are co-leading the development of the Southern Rockies Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC).

This effort represents a broader vision of conservation that includes working with partners across landscapes to ensure that science capacity is in place so that resource managers can successfully address these 21st-century conservation challenges. We are in the process of reaching out to resource managers and others within the Southern Rockies LCC and invite you to contact us (contacts provided below) if you are interested in participating.

What is an LCC?

In 2010, the Department of Interior developed a plan for a coordinated, science-based response to impacts on our land, water, cultural, and wildlife resources. LCCs are the applied science branch of this strategy. Each LCC will function in a specific geographic area, and will form a national and ultimately international network.

For the Southern Rockies LCC, the initial partnership will be between Reclamation, the Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, other federal agencies, states, tribes, non-government organizations (NGO's), universities, and other entities that will provide science and decision-support tools to inform management decisions that will protect and conserve resources necessary to meet the complementary trust responsibilities of the partners involved. In time, the LCC is envisioned as a self-directed partnership managed by a steering committee comprised of interested partners with a shared resource conservation focus.

Geography of the Southern Rockies LCC

The Southern Rockies LCC encompasses large portions of four states: Utah, Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico, as well as smaller parts of Wyoming, Idaho, and Nevada. The area is geographically complex, including wide elevation and topographic variation; from 14,000 foot peaks to the Grand Canyon and cold desert basins.

This topographically complex region includes the headwaters of the Colorado River and Rio Grande, the Wasatch and Uinta Mountains to the west, and the Southern Rocky Mountains to the east, separated by the rugged tableland of the Colorado Plateau.

Resource Management Issues

There are numerous resource management questions that may be addressed by the Southern Rockies LCC, ultimately determined by the partnership. For example, conservation of sensitive species that occur across a broad range of habitats in the LCC compels a broad-scale coordinated approach (e.g. Uinta Basin hookless cactus, greater sage grouse, several Colorado River fishes, Gunnison prairie dog, bighorn sheep, aspen communities and yellow-billed cuckoo). Major ecosystems include alpine tundra, subalpine and montane forests, piñon-juniper woodlands, desert shrublands, and grasslands. With changing climate conditions, impacts from energy development, invasive species (e.g. tamarisk, cheatgrass, aquatic nuisance species), and altered large scale ecological processes (mountain pine beetle epidemics, wildfire) create even more uncertainty in our understanding

of management needs. Water is the lifeblood for many of the natural and human communities in the LCC. Understanding the potential impacts of drought and increasing climate fluctuations on the hydrologic regime will be critical to successful resource management. The LCC will facilitate developing the scientific capacity and data to inform these evolving resource management issues.

Benefits of Participating in the LCC

One benefit of participating in the Southern Rockies LCC is the ability to leverage your contributions with those contributed by the other partners. This will ensure a flow of science information and shared partner contributions across the management interests within the Southern Rockies LCC region. In this way, the LCC will aggregate capacity, create synergies, and reduce duplication of efforts.

Next Steps for the Southern Rockies LCC

- A scoping team will begin to organize a steering committee to be in place by late 2010.
- Begin prioritizing the critical resource issues and threats. Begin identifying existing data, capacities, and partnerships to address those issues.
- Assess the science needs and gaps, and identify the role of the LCC in filling those gaps.
- Develop a shared conservation vision and coordination on critical issues.

How will the LCC help?

The LCC will facilitate the delivery of applied science to inform resource management decisions that address climate change and other regional scale stressors (e.g., drought). The LCC will facilitate an on-going dialog between scientists and resource managers to create a

mechanism for informed conservation planning, effective conservation delivery and adaptive monitoring to evaluate the effects of management actions. For example, potential functions of the LCC could include:

- Assist partners in identifying immediate time critical science and management needs for natural and cultural resources conservation
- Develop explicit and measurable biological objectives to guide conservation design and delivery.
- Develop landscape level data and analyses to support natural and cultural resource conservation and protection.
- Provide information that integrates climate modeling with ecological responses and management strategies.
- Monitor habitat instabilities from invasive species threats and from native species range expansions.
- Facilitate the development of coordinated natural and cultural resource strategies, including public outreach.
- Design and evaluate short- and long-term adaptation approaches.

Your Invitation to Join the Southern Rockies LCC

The Southern Rockies LCC will take advantage of, and build upon, existing planning efforts and will collaborate with partners who have already established strong working relationships with a focus on resource management within the Southern Rockies LCC. If you are interested in participating in the Southern Rockies LCC, please join us!

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<http://www.usbr.gov/WaterSMART/lcc.html>

